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Editorial

I. SOME FURTHER DOUBTS ABOUT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

When I wrote about a month or so ago about the kind of English considered suitable for festivals, I received a number of letters, some of which were most moving in their concern for the misfortunes of our language. Anyone who writes words about words is, of course, at a disadvantage, the disadvantage of a ruminant who eats what he walks on. In particular, very few people have written about the English language without making fools of themselves. But I should like to go further into this matter since I see that it is of concern to my readers.

The first trouble to be cleared away, as with all reforms, is the reformers. I am not concerned, for the moment, with the great 'scandal about the origin' of language itself, the emotive theory, but with the many minor authorities who are tinkering away at the structure of English itself. They are all purists, that is to say their attitude is a deeply emotional one of shock and concern, followed by restriction, elimination, patching up and rejection of uncouth words. The nature of their puritanism will depend on which of the two main theories they hold about the language—whether they think of it as a 'natural growth', or as an art, instrument, etc., deliberately developed by civilised people through the centuries. I should say that most writers on the subject combine the two attitudes and consider the English language as having been a wild, rich, luxuriant growth *until now*, i.e. until the moment when the writer calls a halt (the expression 'pruning' is often used). If it is asked whether writers on the language make very much difference to it, the answer is that they do, and no subject is more encouraging to the reformer. George Orwell pointed out, quite correctly, that 'explore every avenue' and 'leave no stone unturned' were 'killed by the jeers of a few journalists'. The wistful dream (of Swift among others) of an English academy ('which I,' exclaimed Dr. Johnson, 'who can never wish to see dependence multiplied, hope the spirit of English liberty will hinder or destroy') has proved unattainable. The very names of Swift and Johnson, once invoked, show the power of the single literary man, or the single knockabout journalist (for they were both this) over the historic development of the language. This position was reinforced in the last generation by the reverence paid to H. W. Fowler and his *Modern English Usage* which unfortunately, however, confirmed writers on language as whimsical, well-bred, half-baked and half-scholarly form masters.

I hold against them three tiresome errors.

1. *A lack of understanding of the character of English* (whose greatest charm is its flexibility) and absurd reliance on the embalming pages of the *New English Dictionary*, which appears to be taking the place of the wished-for Academy. Ivor Brown, in a recent article, complained about the 'preposterous' word *backlog*, 'whose only dictionary meaning is a large piece of wood.' What does the dictionary meaning of any word matter in a language where, for example, verbs and nouns are practically interchangeable ('he childed as I fathered')? No one, not even the most powerful, can prevent the introduction of new words into English (about fifty per cent of them usually become permanent) or a wholesale interchange of meanings, until English rots away and petrifies.

2. *A failure to grasp the very different reasons, or what pass for reasons, behind the use of language.* All appear to assume that it is the ambition of everyone who uses language to be clear and easily understood. Attacks, frequent to the point of tedium, are made on officialese or what I should call *Supplementary Portion* (that is what the old G.W.R. used to call a second helping) *English.*

This is, quite rightly, seen as a monstrous abuse and, when in doubt, writers on words always fall back on the safe card of inventing a plain statement 'as a Government department would put it.' None of them seems to consider that their plain statement does not convey the same thing at all. The railways, when complaints were made to them about this matter of Supplementary Portions, said that the public would not like the change. *It was part of the grandeur of the dining-cars,* echoing the imagined stiffness of an aristocratic conversation, as the Britannia metal cruets and starched coarse white tablecloths gallantly reflected an upper-class luncheon party with everything of the best. In the thirties, people used to call the decorations applied to Victorian machine-made furniture 'meaningless'—the fact being that they had a very real meaning indeed, being meant to suggest expense and profusion.

The long words and apparently idiotic paraphrases in official documents have, also, a very real reason behind them. They are meant to suggest power, superior intelligence and a veiled menace. They are long for the same reason as in Middle English the words connected with law, government, the church and all forms of coercion were French. 'Supplementary portion' does not mean 'second helping' at all.

We shall get nowhere with English if we discard our rich assortment of implied emotions. It is on their account that we retain such a lavish number of synonyms (though in fact, I think, there are no synonyms in English). I do not say that official language does not need reforming; it is the most glaring case for reform that exists, but it is no good trying to replace it with 'plain words'. They will not be the equivalent of the fusty old long ones or of the new Americanised abstractions. They will express officials playing bears ('Here's how to make the best use of *your* coal!') instead of officials playing, however pitiably, at officials.

3. *A Sympathetic Fallacy* to which philosophers and grammarians are very susceptible; I mean the temptation of importing a political and ethical tinge (usually, I will say this for them, liberal and democratic) to humanise their subjects. If we ask why, in Bertrand Russell's theory of values, all impulses are equally valuable, the only real answer is that impulses are like men and must be given a 'fair start' and an equal chance. This kind of fallacy rages quite unchecked among students of language. It is usually assumed, for example, that English, in getting rid of declensions and inflexions, has done well and 'freed' itself, developing in the same way as Parliamentary institutions. At the same time, Anglo-Saxon words are, in general, good (honest, frank, bluff, fair-haired) whereas Romance words are bad, long, shifty and foreign. Almost no change here from the nineteenth-century view expressed in Freeman's *Norman Conquest,* 'This abiding corruption of our language I believe to have been the one result of the Norman Conquest which has been purely evil' (words, you see, masquerading as Ivanhoe and Rowena). I have lost count of the number of the times I have been advised to use a plain, Anglo-Saxon word, as being good in itself, in preference to any other. Another striking example of the kind of thing I mean was the *Proposals* of the Society for Pure English which declared that '*believing that the best word-makers are the uneducated classes,* we would prefer vivid popular terms to the artificial creations of scientists.' It was quite untrue that Robert Bridges, Professor Walter Raleigh, and Logan Pearsall Smith believed this. What was speaking was the muffled digs of a bad conscience. Honest (Anglo-Saxon) working-men mustn't be left out of Pure English or they might feel disappointed, and show an increasingly unpleasant attitude to life.

Anyone who wants to improve the standard of English must give up the parlour game of derivations and consider emotions as part of meaning. I hope to have the chance to say more about this in a later number of *World Review.*

II. SOME DOUBTS ARISING FROM THE RECENT ELECTION

In this past Election, as in all others, a great many foolish and some wicked things were said. Nothing, however, was more puzzling than Mr. Attlee's pronouncement *ex cathedra* from Transport House: 'Our Socialist philosophy is firmly based upon a belief in the essential goodness of mankind.' What did he mean? Probably Mr. Attlee meant no more than that he and his party believed in democracy and that the British people are on the whole decent and kindly. There may also be an implication that the Labour Movement must be best because it 'comes from the people', and perhaps also a hope that the British public will be kind-hearted enough to forgive the muddle Mr. Attlee and his Government have made of their affairs. But if he was using the words 'philosophy', 'essential' and 'goodness' as precise terms, the statement ceases to be puzzling and becomes pernicious.

There can be no alternative explanation of Mr. Morrison's boast 'Labour understands this new world' in his lamentable broadcast on 17 October. 'A regrettable performance,' *The Manchester Guardian* called it, 'a piece of electioneering and a rather cheap one at that', and very properly advised Mr. Morrison not to try to conduct British foreign policy in election speeches. The *Guardian* (in its leading article of 18 October) applied Mr. Morrison's claim to Persia and the result was none the less devastating for being inevitable. Mr. Morrison was not even left with that last (or more recently, first) refuge of Labour speakers: What would you have done? 'What Mr. Churchill might or might not have done, what Mr. Eden might have done, is anybody's guess. But they could not have cut a more miserable figure of impotence in policy and of ignorance of Asian currents of feeling than did the British Foreign Office under Mr. Morrison.'

We were constantly reminded during the Election (by Labour speakers) that we were no longer living in the days of Palmerston, as if that was something to be grateful for, and as if we needed reminding. Is it an advance from the days of Don Pacifico that a group of leading British industrialists (Mr. Earle of Associated Portland Cement, Lord Lyle of Tate & Lyle, Sir Robert Renwick of Petrochemicals, Major-General Sir Edward Spears of Ashanti Goldfields, Mr. Shearer of Balfour Beatty, Mr. Halford Reddish of Rugby Portland Cement and the Earl of Verulam of Enfield Cables) should be impelled to protest publicly against 'the shame brought upon this country by the Government's mishandling of British interests in Persia'? These men may well be, indeed almost certainly are, Conservatives, but they were quite certainly right when they wrote: 'No effective results can be expected from a twelfth-hour appeal to the Security Council seeing that the Persian Government has already defied the International Court.' And they are, unfortunately, right when they go on to say 'Nothing of all this need have happened if the British Government had shown even a small measure of resolution and foresight at the outset. Instead, it has allowed the greatest of British foreign enterprises to be despoiled, has imperilled our fuel supplies, and is in danger of destroying Commonwealth communications by bringing Russia, via chaos and Communism, to the Persian Gulf—the dread of British statesmanship for more than a century. When first it became plain that British companies could be driven forth and British subjects jailed without cause behind the Iron Curtain, that British seamen could be blown up by Albanians, that Britons could be robbed by Persians, mulcted and oppressed by Chinese—always with impunity—it was naturally being asked, is it safe to be British? The Government has so far muttered "No".'

DESMOND FITZGERALD

Notes

ATLANTIC DEFENCE

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation continues to record more difficulties than it does achievement. Moreover, these difficulties are compounded at three levels—political, administrative and military. The European members are becoming increasingly perturbed at the tendency of the United States to make decisions of policy (such as the alliance with Spain), to which they are not parties but which directly affect their affairs. The formation of a supervisory board of ministerial standing is complicated by the fact that the degree of Cabinet permanence differs widely in the various countries, while the American delegates find it much more difficult to answer for the final attitude of Congress than do their European colleagues, who can usually pledge the support of the current legislature. The dispersal of the principal agencies, with the Council of Deputies in London, the Standing Group in Washington and the Financial, Economic and Defence Production Boards in Paris has also led to considerable confusion.

On the military side, an immense advance has been made under the command of General Eisenhower, but economic considerations are having a serious effect on the supply of equipment. There is a serious gap between performance and target, and this is increasing with inflation. Drastic measures will be necessary if we are to reach the degree of preparedness envisaged for 1953.

GERMANY

The quest for German unity presents the Western Allies with one of their worst problems. Their advocacy of German rearmament is one of the most bitter pills the populations in the Western countries of Europe have had to swallow. There are still a large number of people who would be prepared to consider any alternative arrangement. It is more than likely that Russia shares this view quite genuinely. No one has more bitter memories of German military aggression. On the other hand, the proposals now being bandied between Bonn and Berlin for the purpose of holding free all-German elections are sufficiently tempting to require further study.

The solution to this problem may well prove a test case. If Russia, through the East German government, agrees that elections should be held on terms that provide unquestionably for a secret ballot with all its concomitants, a nagging fear will have been banished from minds that still think ill of ultimate German intentions, and a powerful indication given of Russia's basic desire for peace. It seems on the face of it most unlikely that the Russians would ever consent to dismantle the elaborate edifice they have constructed in their Zone, but stranger things have happened.

NORTH AFRICA

Upheavals in the Middle and Far East have tended to obscure the fact that there is considerable unrest in a large area much nearer Europe. In Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, the French have only been able to maintain a semblance of normality by a series of repressive measures.

Habib Bourguiba, whose movement is supported by a very large section of the population in Tunisia, has recently been visiting Britain and the United States. The French reacted critically to the attention accorded him in the British Press, but have been careful to make no comment on his three visits to the State Department in Washington and his broadcast on the Voice of America. It is to be hoped that his return will find his social-democratic and anti-Communist sentiments reinforced. In Algeria things look much less favourable, as this territory is considered part of metropolitan France, and there are therefore no concessions to make to the indigenous inhabitants in spite of their increasing unrest. The Moroccan Istiqlal is thinking in terms of an independent Arab North Africa. If the three movements finally coalesce, it will take more than the arrest of hundreds of their adherents to stave off serious disturbances.

THE FEDERATION OF THE DANUBE

LIEUT.-COL. F. O. MIKSCHE

Colonel Miksche, already well known as a politico-strategic writer, was appointed Czech Military Attaché in Paris after the war. He was recalled to Czechoslovakia by the Communists, but soon afterwards escaped and acted as adviser on Central European affairs to the Chief of the French General Staff. He is now seconded from the French Army to the Portuguese Higher Staff College

EUROPE is today living under the constant menace of a new war, the outbreak of which would appear to be only a question of time. The catastrophe can happen tomorrow, or in a year or two, or perhaps later. There can be no doubt that in the past many great mistakes have been made. Passions have gained the upper hand over cool reflections. Only too often propaganda was the basis of official policy, with attractive slogans governing the actions of statesmen. In our time there is no sufficient differentiation between Utopia and reality, party and State policy, journalism and diplomacy.

In May 1951, the composition and policy of the National Committees, brought into existence by the U.S.A., was the subject of a debate in the British Parliament. Major Legge Bourke, M.P., said:

> 'I think there is a very great danger, and we ought to face it, that this type of warfare—the cold war—will fall into the hands of those who were discredited in days gone by and who are discredited now in the countries concerned. This must not be just a refugee organisation. There could be nothing more fatal to the Christian and Western cause than for it to be thought in the countries behind the Iron Curtain that all this propaganda is being done to restore the old and discredited régimes. We must produce something better than that.'

Whereupon Mr. Kenneth Younger, Minister of State, gave the following answer:

> 'I think the hon. Member is right when he said we had to be on our guard against allowing this thing to develop into an unco-ordinated series of efforts by groups of discredited refugees.'
>
> *Hansard*, Vol. 487, No. 106.

It does not seem as yet as though the Free European Movement had any definite target, hence the prevailing confusion. Talk about freedom and democracy does not constitute a real political programme. These words lend themselves to interpretations which vary with the wishes or needs of the speaker. But what are the political aims of the West? A return to the Versailles *status quo* or a United Europe?

In the last analysis, public opinion is only an artificial product of propaganda. The enslaved peoples behind the Iron Curtain listen anxiously to what the West has to say to them, and their public opinion is naturally built upon what they hear most about. Therefore, when Western propaganda talks of the Versailles Order, this appears to be what the West wants, with the logical effect that Europe would again revert to the quarrelsome atmosphere which characterised the period between the two wars, and which was the main cause of the second one. In the first enthusiasm over being liberated from Bolshevism, anything would be accepted, but things look different when the first flush is over; and it is then that the difficulties of the past would appear once more.

* * *

In its traditional form (that is to say before 1918) Europe consisted of three clearly-defined, geo-political parts: East, Central, and Western Europe. It was the Centre's important task to maintain the balance between East and West. This Centre has always acted as a bulwark against invasions threatening from the East—Slav, Mongol or Turkish. Even German antagonism against the West could not alter the historic rôle of Central Europe, although this fact does not seem to have been borne sufficiently in mind by

those in whose power it was to make political decisions after the First and Second World Wars.

The unity of the Danubian nations was dissolved in 1918. In 1945, Germany was compelled by her '*unconditional surrender*' to withdraw from the European Concert, with the result that the balance of power on the Continent was finally destroyed. Thus Central Europe has ceased to exist as a factor of power-policy. Europe now consists of two geo-political parts only—East and West; and as the East has absorbed the greater portion of Central Europe, thus weakening the West, Europe's destiny now depends greatly on American help. Was the realisation of this position which led to the Atlantic Pact an effort to restore with America's assistance the equilibrium which she could not achieve by herself?

The consolidation of Central Europe, by which I mean the creation of a strong centre in the heart of the Continent, remains one of the basic conditions of European stability. It is a mistake to underestimate the real national character of Russian policy, i.e., Panslavism. This fact could hardly be altered even by the complete destruction of Communism. Russia's daily increase in population is approximately 8,000, so that in 49 years, i.e., in the year 2000, she will have some 500 million imhabitants, whereas, in comparison, the population of Western Europe is stationary. It is difficult to see how, under this enormous pressure from the East, Europe (England included) can continue to exist without the hard core of a consolidated centre.

It would also be unwise to count too much on '*pan-Europe*'. The proceedings in Strasbourg have shown only too clearly how far we are from realising the idea; to build upon it would be nothing less than to base Europe's political organisation on something which does not exist, and is not likely to do so for a very long time. The Federalisation of Europe cannot be achieved at one stroke, but only gradually, step by step. It is necessary, first of all, to group together into Regional Federations those entities which are economically and culturally complementary to each other, and already have some tradition of common background. Such a grouping of several nations, possessing identical economic interests, geographical and cultural characteristics, is a workable proposition in the Danube Basin, which could thus become the core of crystallisation in a progressive development of Central Europe.

* * *

In the past, no great statesman ever questioned the need for unity of the the Danube Basin as a primary condition of European stability:

'The Austrian monarchy is a combination of ill assorted States. Such a power is necessarily weak, but she is an adequate bulwark against the barbarians, and a necessary one. In the future the Habsburg Empire will stand with its back towards Europe and its front to the East, thus protecting Western civilisation from the aggression of Russia.'—Talleyrand on 17 October 1805 to Napoleon, before the battle of Austerlitz.

'What should be put in that space in Europe which is occupied by the Austrian State from Tyrol to the Bukovina? New formations in that area would be of a permanently revolutionary character.' —Bismarck in 1868.

'If Austria did not exist, she would have to be invented.'—František Palacký, Czech historian, in 1862, generally considered in Bohemia as the 'Father of the Czech nation', but unfortunately less known in the West than T. G. Masaryk.

'In America, as elsewhere, it was hard to convince people that it would be necessary to break up Austria-Hungary. Austria was generally looked upon as a counterpoise to Germany, as a necessary organisation of small peoples and odds and ends of peoples, and as a safeguard against balkanisation. I feared that we might achieve nothing if the war ended quickly. If it were protracted we might have more time for propaganda.'—Prof. T. G. Masaryk, *The Making of a State*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1929.

The centrifugal force of extreme nationalism destroyed in 1918 what was about to develop, not by brutal revolution but by peaceful evolution, into a great Central European Commonwealth. It destroyed then what we would now so much like to build up again, under much less favourable circumstances. The practical misery caused to all peoples by this nationalism was much greater than the theoretical happiness it was supposed to give them. An enormous decadence has overcome during the last thirty years this once so civilised part of Europe. The decision to split up the unity of the Danubian nations was neither humane nor progressive.

The United States seems prepared to support the federalisation of Central Europe, but at the same time we have the impression that such important factors as tradition, common cultural standard, etc., are not getting the attention they deserve. If the various National Committees were formed in the hope that they would be able to produce something sensible, we shall have to wait a long time. To recognise them as governments would be tantamount to the recognition of the disorder brought into existence by the Versailles Treaty. A new Central Europe cannot be created by a few fanatical nationalists, but only by men who represent not only the interests of their own small tribes but who also regard the problem as a whole from a supernational angle, and are no longer under the disturbing influence of their political past.

While I am dealing with the subject of Central Europe, I should like to add that it would be a mistake to set a federation of that area on too big a scale. Large entities, stretching from the Baltic to the Black and Adriatic Seas, could hardly have the inner cohesion which would be so necessary in a future Europe. It would be difficult to bring all the different nations inhabiting this region under one common denominator into a federation with no real historic economic background. There are reasons to believe that this idea is proposed by the Poles. Poland will have many difficulties in future with Germany on account of the Oder frontier, with the Balts over Vilna, and with the Ukrainians over East Galicia. These ambitions of some Polish exiles are not justified historically, ethnographically or morally. As far as we in the Danube Basin are concerned, they only interest us to the extent that we do not wish to be drawn into the quarrels which would be unavoidable if the Danubian countries were to go into a federation with the Poles. As a matter of fact, the Danube Basin has very little in common with Poland either economically or culturally. That country lies north of the Carpathians, and even during the Habsburg monarchy, the Polish provinces led an almost isolated existence.

There are other important reasons. A Central European Federation embracing Poland could hardly count on Austria also being a member. It is time that the West understood that Austria, as fashioned in 1918, cannot remain independent for economic reasons. If, therefore, Austria were to remain on her own, an *Anschluss* with Germany would sooner or later be inevitable. And if the Germans get to Vienna again, the whole political order of the Danube Basin will be thrown to the winds and Germany's pressure on the whole South East of Europe, especially the Balkan peninsula and Rumania, will be inevitable. Such a development could eventually be a seriously disturbing factor in the co-operation between Germany and the West, especially in Franco-German relations, a danger which can only be averted if Austria is made an integral part of a Danube federation.

THE PROBLEM OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

It is possible that Czechs, Austrians, Hungarians and Slovaks might come to an understanding amongst themselves on a reasonable basis, especially as for centuries they were leading a common existence, but only on condition that the West no longer clings to the idea of the Czechoslovakian State. Czechoslovakia does not fit into the framework of the Danube Basin, no matter how much one may try. Even to create it, territories from all the neighbouring nations had to be incorporated, with the result that in 1938 that country comprised:

7·1	millions	Czechs
3·0	,,	Slovaks
3·5	,,	Germans

0·8 ,, Hungarians
0·4 ,, Ukrainians
0·2 ,, Poles
Total: 14 millions

And as, from 1925 or thereabouts, the Slovaks lived in latent antagonism towards the Czechs, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that 50% of Czechoslovakia's inhabitants were in opposition to the State. Then, again, there is the quite unnatural geographical shape of that country, which stretches about 700 miles right across the Danubian Basin and is at places only 70 miles wide.

In the meantime, in 1946, the 3·5 million Sudeten Germans who have lived in Bohemia since the thirteenth century, and at the Versailles conference had vainly pleaded for self-determination, were rejected in a most inhuman fashion. It is difficult to see how some nine million refugees, who are at present in Western Germany, will be assimilated within the next few decades, whilst their former countries, the Sudetenland and East Prussia, remain practically deserted.

Czechoslovakia was the artificial product of a peace conference—a child of propaganda—whilst Austria and Hungary were her victims. Through the partition of the Danube Monarchy in 1918, Czechoslovakia inherited 65% of the industries which formerly belonged to an Empire of 54 millions and which had been mostly founded with Viennese capital. It was principally to this favourable economic position that this new State owed its reputation. On the other hand, does not this fact prove that the Czech provinces of the former Danubian Empire were by no means so much exploited by Vienna as was maintained at the Versailles Conferences?

To talk about the restoration of Czechoslovakia nowadays is plain nonsense. The Slovaks, who at all times were opposed to Prague, will never forget that their rightly or wrongly revered leader, Mgr. Tiso, was condemned by a Czechoslovak court and that Beneš, in spite of the intervention of the Vatican, confirmed his death sentence. By so doing, Beneš really signed the death warrant of the Czechoslovak Republic. This action created an unbridgeable gulf between Slovaks and Czechs. The few Slovak emigrants wandering about in the West, advocating the idea of a Czechoslovak State, do not represent the free will of the Slovak people, who are today, at least to the extent of 80%, fanatically anti-Czech. And without the Slovaks there can be no Czechoslovakia.

The fact that propaganda made Masaryk play the rôle of a prophet does not alter anything. We should not forget that Czechoslovakia during her whole existence was but an international calamity, and that any policy based on false historical foundations can only bring new misfortunes. Why, therefore, cling to ideas which in the past have been proved erroneous, which were one of the main causes of World War II, and the practical existence of which only lasted for twenty years, a mere moment in the life of nations? It remains to be seen whether the West intends to support the ambitions of a few emigrants, who for years have lost contact with their own nations and do not represent anything but themselves. However that may be, we should not forget that in Central Europe there are only eight million Czechs, a distinct minority compared with seven million Austrians, eight million Hungarians and three million Slovaks.

It is rather surprising that free European propaganda is still eulogising Masaryk. This must strike all Austrians, Hungarians and Slovaks as being very strange. Of course, for many Czech politicians it is easier to create political capital out of the Masaryk legend than to take up an entirely new line. Would it, however, not be advisable discreetly to do away with this myth and not depend, for propaganda purposes, on names which before history bear the heavy responsibility of disrupting the unity of the Danube peoples?

* * *

The solution of the Danube problem and, in a broader sense, that of Central Europe, lies in a correct blending of the various peoples within a Federation. Only thus can the Slav peoples of Central Europe be prevented from again falling victims to Panslavist ideology, and the Austrians and Hungarians to that of Pan-Germanism. Such a policy alone can

restore the internal equilibrium in the Danube Basin and convert it once more into a constructive factor in European politics. From a practical point of view, there appears to be only one possibility of establishing a Central European Federation, and that would be to group together the countries—Austria, Bohemia and Moravia, Hungary, Slovakia—into a sort of Danubian Switzerland. For this purpose, Czechoslovakia would first have to be split up into her historical, i.e., natural, parts: Bohemia and Moravia on one side, Slovakia on the other. We can only repeat that neither Austria nor Hungary will resign itself indefinitely to the existence of Czechoslovakia, to which even the Slovaks are opposed. The position would be different in the case of Bohemia/Moravia being separated from Slovakia. Such a Federation would consist of four autonomous countries: Austria, Bohemia/Moravia, Hungary and Slovakia. The presence of the Czechs and Slovaks is a guarantee that the Federation could not turn pro-German, that of the Austrians and Hungarians that she cannot become pro-Russian.

Of course, even the constitution of such a political organisation would prove to have its difficulties. The Allied powers would have to invest Austria with a more important status than what she has held so far. In spite of the occupation, Austria is still the only remaining *free* Danubian country, and the development of Vienna could have a great influence on the future shaping of the whole Danube Basin. For instance, there are even today half as many Czechs living in Vienna as in Prague, and they are the true bearers of the tradition which, until not very long ago, has linked Bohemia with Austria.

Austria is today one of the most important advanced posts of the West in Central Europe. She will only be able to carry on the fight against Bolshevism if the world is willing to offer her a more just deal than that to which she has been condemned by the Versailles Treaty. Instead of putting too much faith in a few desperate emigrants, would it not be better for the Western Powers to make Vienna the basis of their future Danube policy?

The Czech and Slovak problems ought to be dealt with separately. The oft-repeated argument, that Czechoslovakia's partition into her natural components would cause an even greater dislocation in the Danube Basin, fails to convince, if one realises that such a partition is the essential prerequisite of the creation of a large political entity. The restoration of the unity of the Danube Basin does not hinder the eventual Federation of the whole of Europe; on the contrary, it can make it only easier. From whichever angle one regards the problem, the establishment of a Danube Federation appears to be the first constructive step to be taken in the future political reorganisation of Central Europe.

Perhaps it may appear strange that all this should have been written by a Czech. However, a political action can only be judged by its results, and these generally only appear during the lifetime of the next generation. If regarded in this light, it is clear that Masaryk's 'liberation' led to the 'balkanisation' of Central Europe, and that what the Versailles Treaty has created was incomparably worse than what had existed before. One can say with a clear conscience that, according to experience, only bad Czechs can be Czechoslovakians.

MR. EDEN ON THE MIDDLE EAST

An important part of the art of diplomacy lies in anticipation. Must we always be taken by surprise? It didn't need any feat of imagination to understand the need for a new pattern of Middle East defence immediately after the war. Yet for fully three years, perhaps longer, there's been a vacuum in our Middle East policy which must be filled with all speed. We support the proposals now made in agreement with the United States, France, and Turkey. But if Egypt persists in refusing them, we must stand on our clear rights in the existing Treaty which, as it happens, I negotiated as Foreign Secretary. Above all, we are in honour bound to uphold our pledge to the Sudan.

Party Political Broadcast, 19 October

PALESTINE ARAB REFUGEES

CHARLES T. REYNER

MORE than 880,000 refugees from Palestine are scattered in misery throughout the Middle East. Since these people fled their homes in 1947 and 1948, during and after the fighting that preceded the establishment of Israel, they have been living in a state of squalor that is appalling even by the standards of Asia Minor. They have had not enough to eat, little or no employment, housing that in the best conditions was far from adequate, and no hope for the future. After three years of these conditions, they constituted one of the most fertile breeding grounds for Communism in any part of the world. Their presence has made political stability impossible, has been a stumbling-block to peace treaties between Israel and her neighbours, and has kept approximately 14,000,000 people in more than 600,000 square miles under the threat of anarchy and revolution.

The general tensions of the region, feeding, and in turn being fed by, the restlessness of the refugees, in July produced the assassination of King Abdullah of Jordan, and Riad Bey el Solh, first Prime Minister of Lebanon. There have been an increasing number of demonstrations and some rioting.

The political atmosphere of the Middle East today demands bold and generous action to relieve the distress and bring hope of a future to the refugees, for they are one of the most dangerous elements in an explosive situation. The problem is no less serious today than it was two or three years ago and cannot be solved without bold thinking and careful planning by United Nations officials, continued understanding and sympathy by leaders of the Arab governments, and the expenditure of many millions of dollars by the United States, Britain and other members of UNO. The already overtaxed economies of the Arab countries cannot absorb this additional group unless the re-establishment effort is tied to a general programme designed to develop a latent potential which could support far more people than now live between the Turkish frontier on the north and the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean on the south.

More than thirty per cent of the refugees still live in tents and about five per cent are housed in mosques, convents and other public buildings. Many must seek shelter in doorways, caves and ruins. Several families have established themselves in the rubble of the ancient Roman theatre in Amman, capital of Jordan and the 'Rabbath' of Biblical times. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has established a village of reed-roofed, mud-walled huts for 20,000 refugees on the east bank of the Jordan river within sight of Jericho, and a similar village on the road between Jericho and Jerusalem. These mud homes are not unlike the housing that has been native to the area for centuries. Six thousand Bedouins live in a tent camp near Damascus and the Sheikhs of the twelve tribes represented administer its affairs under the supervision of an UNRWA officer. The UNRWA operates a total of sixty-six camps.

More than half the total refugee population—some 466,000—are in Jordan. Those that have come into Amman to live in houses, tents, caves and ruins, have swelled its population from 40,000 to nearly 150,000. An additional 106,000 are in Lebanon, where for both political and economic reasons they cannot be absorbed. This country of 3,475 square miles must support 1,229,000 of its own people. The population of Lebanon is approximately fifty-two per cent Christian and forty-eight per cent Moslem. Under the terms of its constitution, its President must always be Christian and its Prime Minister a Moslem. If the overwhelmingly Moslem refugees were to be admitted to citizenship, the Christian majority would find themselves a minority; they will not relinquish their present position.

More than 83,000 refugees are in Syria and nearly 24,000 are still in Israel.

The most distressed of all Arab refugees are the 198,000 who live in the 'Gaza Strip', a five by twenty-five-mile waste of sand dunes wedged between Israel and the Mediterranean on Egypt's north-east frontier. Nearly seventy per cent of them live in tents, and the remainder huddle in the villages with a native population of 70,000 who are even more miserable. Because they have not fled their homes, they cannot be considered refugees qualifying for UNRWA help, but they cannot support themselves because most of their fields are across the frontier of the 'strip' in Israel proper. The government of Jordan estimates it has more than 100,000 citizens in similar circumstances. Their homes are in the Arab portion of Palestine and their fields across the frontier in the Israeli area.

Economic loss to the Middle East as a whole has been immeasurable since these people became homeless. More than 65,000 families came from the land and for the last four crop seasons have contributed nothing to the region's scanty food supplies. The wage-earners of nearly 19,000 families were artisans, craftsmen, metal and machinery workers and men from the building trades who have suffered a greater loss; their skills have deteriorated during their enforced idleness.

Equally damaging but not as tangible has been the loss of morale and spirit. It is inevitable that, with a small percentage of the refugees, this effect will be more or less permanent. To some, who always have lived sub-marginally, the discarded army tent, the meagre UNRWA ration and the protection of its health and administrative services have brought a degree of comfort, luxury and security they have never known. They see nothing attractive in the agency's plans to help them become self-supporting, and undoubtedly will resist to the last any change in their present pattern of life. This group, however, is small.

The great majority of the refugees will be an asset to any country where they make their permanent homes. They come from a background of better education, more thorough and advanced training, and a higher standard of living than is enjoyed in other parts of the Arab world. Five refugees are members of the eleven-man cabinet of Jordan, and many hold highly responsible positions in the governments of that country and Syria.

Operating on support provided by the governments of twenty nations, the largest contributors of which are England, France and the United States, the UNRWA had distributed a daily ration of between 1,600 and 1,700 calories—flour, sugar, rice, beans peas, lentils, margarine and oil—to each of its charges, and has provided housing, medical services, education of the children, vocational training of the youth and a limited amount of clothing. Three United Nations specialised agencies—the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the United Nations' International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)—have provided technical supervision and assistance in their respective fields, and the latter group has furnished daily milk for more than 430,000 children under fifteen, and for nursing and pregnant women.

In the early months of its relief effort the UNO attempted to provide employment through the financing of public works—roads, irrigation, canals, afforestation, etc. —in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, but a General Assembly resolution of December, 1950, directed that funds be withdrawn from this purpose and be devoted to projects which would become self-supporting and offer the refugee a permanent future.

Futility and stalemate have dogged the efforts of the UNRWA until the last few months. The Agency and its predecessor, the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees, and other UNO specialised agencies, have spent more than $60,000,000, but all efforts to reach a permanent solution foundered on political differences between the Arab States and Israel.

The Arab leaders refused to discuss peace terms with Israel until it came forward with a solution of the refugee problem. They demanded that any refugee, wishing to do so, have the right to return to his home in Palestine, and they asked financial

compensation for those who did not wish to return. Israel, in turn, refused to discuss the refugee problem except in direct connection with peace treaty talks, although it did at one time offer to accept 100,000 refugees of its own selection, provided the settlement of that group was a part of a simultaneous settlement of the entire question. Neither side would yield.

United Nations officers, realising that most of the Moslem refugees would be reluctant to return to what had become a Jewish state, even if given the opportunity, meanwhile sought another solution. The Arab governments—particularly those of Iraq, Jordan and Syria—were asked to settle the refugees wherever work and homes could be found for them.

Jordan gave full political and economic rights to the 466,000 refugees within her frontiers and was willing to co-operate, but there was little hope of a permanent solution there, because the resources of the country were barely adequate to support a native population of 700,000. The other Arab governments were not sympathetic with UNO plans. Such settlement, they said, would 'prejudice' the rights of the refugees ever to return to their former homes in the event of a future political settlement with Israel. They also felt it would 'prejudice' their rights to compensation for the losses they had suffered in leaving their homes and livelihoods. Some neutral observers in the Middle East added that Arab leaders wished to keep the refugees in their present condition for use as a political weapon against Israel.

UNO officials and Western diplomats continued to press for a change of view, and the UNRWA staff prepared a series of plans for integration of the refugee with little or no cost to the host country. They hoped to use funds provided by UNO member governments to give individual refugee families a start towards a self-supporting life by lending them money to start small businesses or by setting them up with a house, tools, animals and seed, on the vast unused acreages of the public domain of Iraq and Syria.

Finally, last February, when many officials had begun to give up hope and could see no future except continued relief, the Council of the League of Arab States decided at a Cairo meeting that it was in the best interests of everybody to encourage the refugees to make plans for 'temporary' settlement wherever a place could be found. The settlement must be 'temporary', it insisted, so as not to 'prejudice' the refugees' rights. The United Nations accepted this condition and since then Arab government co-operation has become notably more active and more sincere.

There was never any serious suggestion of resettling the refugees in an area outside the Middle East. Another UNO specialised agency—the International Refugee Organisation—was in the midst of a programme to resettle one million eastern European refugees from Germany, Austria and Italy in new homes abroad. Two such projects could not be undertaken at the same time and probably not in the same decade.

After the February decision of the Arab League, UNRWA officials redoubled their efforts to secure the approval and co-operation of the individual states. They presented plans for 'minor' projects which would provide for the future of a single family or small groups of families, and more ambitious 'mass' schemes for the settlement of large groups in agricultural life.

First progress in the integration of refugees into new homes and jobs came in Jordan this spring when, with the co-operation of the government, UNRWA set up and put into operation a plan to re-establish artisans, craftsmen and tradesmen in their former trades through cash loans for the purchase of equipment, materials and supplies. Those who wished to take advantage of the scheme prepared detailed plans of their project, complete with estimates of the amount of funds required, potential earnings and prospects of repayment. The plans were reviewed by a board composed of officials of UNRWA and the Jordan government before being approved and the money lent.

In the first three and a half months following the launching of this type of project in May, some forty families have been given a new start.

UNRWA's objective in plans now taking shape in its headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon, is to find jobs and homes for at least 150,000 families in the next three years. Projects now in investigation and planning stages include those of the type now assisting small groups in Jordan, as well as sweeping schemes for expanded irrigation, land development and realisation of the almost untapped industrial potential of the Arab world.

'This is a major social and economic dislocation affecting the entire area,' said John B. Blandford, the new director of UNRWA. 'It is the rôle of the United Nations to step in and give the Arab States any assistance we can which will help them solve the problem. We will use our resources to assist in putting refugees in new homes near present employment opportunities, near employment opportunities which we ourselves will help the countries develop, or near opportunities which we will stimulate others to develop.'

Mr. Blandford, who succeeded Canadian General Howard Kennedy as UNRWA Director on 1 July, realises that the welfare of the refugees cannot be considered apart from that of the millions among whom they have been forced. It is impossible to improve the lot of the refugee without also taking steps to lift the general standard of living, and it is futile to attempt to permanently improve these general conditions without at the same time easing the political and economic tension caused by the presence of the refugees.

Since assuming the UNRWA directorship after serving a year as the United States member of its four-nation Advisory Commission, he has travelled throughout the Middle East, talking with the governments, with individual influential Arabs and with the diplomatic representatives of Western governments which are interested in the problems either directly or through the United Nations. That he has been able to secure so much sincere co-operation from Arab leaders is significant; United Nations prestige has not been high among Moslems since the fighting in Palestine, and it reached a new low during the Lake Huleh marsh drainage dispute between Syria and Israel only a few weeks before Mr. Blandford took over the UNRWA.

The leaders of the Middle East have a high respect for his ideas about regional development. They know that he served as general manager of America's giant Tennessee Valley Authority for six critical years when it completely transformed a great area of Central South-eastern United States through flood control, hydro-electrical development and expanded utilisation of its natural resources.

Perhaps the most dramatic of the proposals under study by the UNRWA staff and the Arab governments is a vast water development project for the Tigris-Euphrates valley in upper Iraq. Although the rainfall in this 250-mile-long valley is insufficient for normal agriculture, the soil is known to be unusually fertile. There is more than enough water available from the two historic rivers to provide harvests far beyond anything ever before known in Asia Minor. Mr. Blandford points out that the Iraqi Government will receive many millions of dollars royalties from the recently-signed oil exploitation agreement and that their greatest need will be for technical, rather than financial, assistance.

Another great project under study is that of increasing the water supply and intensifying the cultivation of more than 5,000,000 acres of fertile land in El Jezira, in the extreme north-east corner of Syria. This great plain, which in Roman Empire times supported a million people, today has only a fraction of that number. The Syrians themselves have increased its grain production from 50,000 to 500,000 tons a year since the late 1930's and cotton cultivation has made impressive gains.

There still is room in El Jezira for all the refugees in the Middle East, according to UNO officials familiar with the area's possibilities. The development work needed includes the drilling of wells to what they believe to be an adequate supply of water twenty-five feet below the surface, installation of pumps to lift a part of the waters of the upper Euphrates, construction of irrigation canals and the development of a network of elementary roads which would simplify marketing problems and permit diversion of some

cultivation effort from cotton and grain to the more perishable but more profitable crop of fruit.

The addition of fifty or sixty thousand farm families to the present productive population of El Jezira would make a tremendous increase in the total food supply available to the Middle East and would go far toward lifting the general welfare of its people. Agricultural experts at the American University in Beirut estimate that such a development would not only ensure adequate supplies of foodstuffs to the Arab States, but would permit them to make an important contribution to the world's supply.

UNRWA geo-physical teams are now exploring the north-eastern portion of the Sinai Peninsula for underground sources of water. The Egyptian Government has agreed to co-operate in the establishment of 50,000 refugees in the Sinai if water is found. Other areas under investigation for possible development include the far upper valley of the Euphrates, in Syria, and the Shera's, an area on the eastern slopes of Jordan's principal mountain range, south of the Dead Sea and north of the Gulf of Aquaba.

Land development projects illustrate the necessity of relating planning for refugees to planning for the Middle East as a unit. Those preparing these proposals must consider not only a refugee population, but a native, resident population that is increasing at the rate of from sixteen to twenty births-over-deaths per 1,000 a year —one of the highest increase rates in the world. Syria and Iraq also present the special problems of their own nomadic populations, which must be settled before true economic and political stability can be approached. Landless Bedouins and other Arabs in Iraq are estimated by officials of that nation to be in excess of one million. Syria estimates its landless population to be between 150,000 and 200,000.

'We have told the Arabs that if they will prepare plans for a general development which will include the refugees, we will do our best to get the money,' Mr. Blandford says. 'They have asked us for technical assistance in preparing the plans. The whole nature of our own work is changing. We are shifting our emphasis from that of providing relief to that of finding jobs and homes. And we are changing over from an operating agency to one whose primary function will be to give technical assistance of all kinds to local governments. We will advise them and help them in any way that we can, but they will carry the maximum responsibility themselves.

'I feel optimistic—very optimistic—that when we and the Arab governments finish the blueprint of this programme and take it before the world, we will get the money. President Truman has already asked the U.S. Congress for $50,000,000 and I believe Congress will vote it. And if other governments contribute in proportion—say a total of $25,000,000—we will have our first year's financing in hand.

'The United Nations recognises the Middle East as a primary area of responsibility. We want to help these people for their own value to themselves. We want to help them protect their own sovereignty and dignity of citizenship within their own cultural pattern. It follows as day follows night that as their own resources—their natural resources, manpower resources and their spiritual resources—are developed, they will become an increasingly important part of the free world in its fight against Communism.'

UNRWA

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees was created by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on 8 December 1949 and on the following 1 May took over from the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees.

Representatives of England, France, Turkey and the United States sit on the Advisory Commission that assists the Director.

The twenty nations who are the members of UNRWA, all of whom have made contributions to its programmes, are: Denmark, Egypt, France, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Mexico, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Saudi Arabia, Southern Rhodesia, Sweden, Syria, the United Kingdom, the United States, Venezuela and Yemen.

STRAVINSKY'S *'THE RAKE'S PROGRESS'*

FELIX APRAHAMIAN

IGOR Stravinsky has added yet another date to musical history. The occasion was the world première of his latest work, *The Rake's Progress*, an opera on an English libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman, at the Teatro al Fenice in Venice on 11 September. When, shortly after one o'clock on the morning of the 12th, this loveliest of theatres slowly emptied out on to the *Campo* as elegant and famous an audience as it has ever housed, even the professional music critics present knew that they had been privileged witnesses of a great event. That it would be an event was never in question; for the past forty years any new work by Stravinsky has been an event. That it would be an important event was equally certain; an opera occupying the entire evening would be his longest work: also it would be his first considerable essay in setting an English text. But that it should prove a great event, not even the composer's most fervent admirers dared to presume. The event itself left no doubt.

Jean Cocteau has described that other, far-off Stravinsky première, the scandal at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in Paris when *Le Sacre du Printemps* was initiated. It would need as gifted a pen to do justice to the scene at the Fenice. The pearls, ostrich feathers and tulle were there again, even if tails had given way to white tuxedos. Those who hissed in 1913 applauded politely in 1951. How much more apt were the calls of 'Stravinsky' by the enthusiasts, for, whatever the flaws or excellences of performance or presentation, the evening was his.

For some years Stravinsky wanted to write an opera in English, the last of his adopted tongues. (He became an American citizen in 1945.) In the famous Hogarth series, he found a subject which answered his purpose. Not only was he attracted by the tale the pictures told, but by its period. He recognised in Hogarth the quintessence of that aspect of eighteenth-century England which he wished to put to music. Aldous Huxley, consulted on the matter of a librettist, suggested Auden. They met, and in three months the text was ready. Stravinsky started work on the opera, after completing his Mass, in 1948, and finished it on 7 April of this year.

The Hogarth-Auden-Kallman tale or 'morality' traces the career of Tom Rakewell, a young English country gentleman, over the course of a year, from spring to spring. A stranger, Nick Shadow—a demon as well as a reflection of the worst side of Tom's character—brings him news of a fortune. Leaving his sweetheart, Anne Trulove, Tom goes off to London with Shadow to settle his affairs. There he squanders his fortune in pursuit of lust and pleasure, his faint attempts to resist temptation being over-ridden by Shadow. His private follies culminate in his marriage to Baba the Turk, a bearded freak from St. Giles's Fair. Shadow engineers this by an ingeniously perverse argument in which he enjoins Tom to 'ignore those twin tyrants of appetite and conscience.' Anne comes to London to seek Tom, but finds him married. His public follies culminate in a belief, encouraged by Shadow, that his dream of a stone-into-bread machine has come true. He is ruined. In a churchyard, Shadow reveals himself to Tom as a Demon and claims his soul as payment for services rendered during the past year and a day. He proposes, however, to allow Tom's life to depend on his naming three cards correctly. Tom succeeds. Foiled of his prey, the Demon still has power to injure him. Tom dies in Bedlam, insane and imagining himself Adonis, but not until his Venus, Anne, has paid him one final visit. A short epilogue, sung before

the curtain by the principals, points the moral that:

Since Eve went out with Adam
For the hands
And hearts and minds
The Devil finds
A work to do,
A work, dear Sir, fair Madam,
For you and you.

Such a plot offers great scope. No one would doubt Stravinsky's ability to realise its more grotesque episodes splendidly. The chatter of Baba the Turk, the patter of Sellem—the auctioneer who has the task of selling up Tom's London house—the sound of the stone-into-bread machine, are simple matters to the composer of *Tilimbom* and *Petrouchka*. The point and malice of brisk, crackling thirds that bristle rhythmically between C and B major, to introduce a Chorus of Whores and Roaring Boys, show the composer of the *Capriccio* and *Jeu de Cartes* in a familiar, sprightly mood. What is unexpected is his equal success in those passages dealing with love, a human sentiment with which Stravinsky has not previously been concerned in his music. And these are the magical, memorable portions of the score.

The Rake's Progress is in three acts, each comprising three scenes. With its modest orchestra (double wind, strings, timpani and harpsichord—a piano was used in Venice) and set numbers ('I will lace each aria into a tight corset', Stravinsky told his friend Nicolas Nabokoff) interspersed by recitatives, the work makes no attempt to transgress a purely classical mould. The freedom of music drama, whether of Wagner, Moussorgsky or Debussy, is not for Stravinsky: the vague, the indeterminate, is suspect. *On doit toujours se borner, se donner des limites*, he says. He is content to work within the formal bounds of a work like *Don Giovanni*—a favourite opera of his: a framework good enough for Mozart is good enough for him. The miracle is that, within such a framework, Stravinsky has composed not a pastiche, but a great and *original* work. His originality has not created its own form, but is contained *within* one which he gladly imposes upon himself. Therein lies Stravinsky's essential genius.

In the coming months musicians are likely to subject the score of *The Rake's Progress* to minute analysis. Here there is room only to indicate a few of its highlights and to suggest the kind of device by which Stravinsky, casting a set piece in a mould that is eighteenth-century in its general shape and tonality, yet succeeds in writing music that is new and beautiful. The opening duet, in A major, between Anne and Tom (Act I Scene i) offers an example. When Anne sings 'The woods are green and bird and beast at play', her very first note is a C natural which is then altered chromatically to C sharp, the major third of the scale, a simple melodic formula found throughout the work. The pundits will argue as to whether this is an effect of harmonic indetermination between the minor and major modes, or whether—and this is much more likely—Stravinsky intends it as an appoggiatura, or even a kind of melodic anacrusis, a leading-note to the mediant, in the same way as the frequently sharpened D rises to the dominant E. Whatever the technical explanation, this device colours the duet and adds to its lilting charm a hesitancy that is haunting.

In the Brothel Scene (Act I Scene ii) Tom Rakewell sings a Cavatina—unmistakably in C sharp minor, for all its chromatic alterations and modulations—invoking love:

Love, too frequently betrayed
For some plausible desire.

There is no more intense page in twentieth-century music, certainly not in the music of Stravinsky. The formula here is even older than Mozart. It may be found in the *Choralvorspiele* of Bach, in the static or slow-moving bass that pulses beneath *Ich ruf zu Dir* and the conjunct, chromatic polyphony of the closing bars of *O Mensch, beweine deine Sünde grosse*, both from the *Orgelbüchlein*. And yet, by a logical and purposeful dissonance, Stravinsky sets his own seal on every bar.

Equally moving is the whole of the final scene (Act III, Scene iii) in Bedlam, where Tom confuses himself with Adonis and Anne with Venus. The very names of classical mythology suffice Stravinsky to conjure up that mood of supra-terrestrial

serenity which lightens so many pages of *Apollon Musagètes* and *Perséphone*. An important ingredient here is the peaceful consonance of sixths. At the same time as evoking Elysium in a madhouse, Stravinsky in this last scene touches the human emotions of pity and tenderness as nowhere else in his entire output. Anne and Tom become living persons and are no longer the conventional puppets of a morality play.

Auden's *envoi* to *The Rake's Progress* sets Stravinsky a harder task than Da Ponte set Mozart. Pity is never among the sentiments aroused by Don Giovanni's awful and improbable doom, whereas Anne's farewell in Bedlam to the sleeping Tom:

> *In this earthly city we*
> *Shall not meet again, love, yet*
> *Never think that I forget*

is heartrending. Thus the Epilogue will always seem trite and superfluous, not for any intrinsic weakness in Stravinsky's music, nor because the moral that Auden points is particularly flimsy, but because even a hundred and sixty bars of jolly admonitions in a bright A major are insufficient to dispel the utter poignancy of the preceding final scene.

SERGE VORONOFF

EUGENE K. ILYIN

THE future will decide the greatness of Serge Voronoff as a revolutionary surgeon, and judge of his achievements in the treatment of the human body. His sixty years of surgical work and innovation have been the subject of fierce controversy. Although I do not intend to touch on it here (we must leave the assessment to doctors and scientists), we must remember that all revolutionary ideas are nurtured in doubt and suspicion.

My concern is with Voronoff the man, the giant with gentle hands and soft, penetrating voice, sharp eyes and easy smile, whom I knew well for twenty years.

He was born in the quiet south Russian town of Voronege, a place of small houses and large gardens, encircled by a cool, slow-flowing river. He left there when he was eleven years old and never returned; but throughout his life he was influenced by the poetical surroundings of his early years. He always approached his work with the fervour of a poet rather than as a careerist.

Voronoff studied medicine in St. Petersburg and qualified at the age of twenty-five. He was never interested in becoming a prosperous practitioner; he was a medical revolutionary, and like all good revolutionaries of the period, his next stop was Paris. All around him there was talk, unending talk, of political ills and social betterment. Voronoff took no part in it: his concern was with the human body, not with man's growing conscience.

Above all, he wanted a chance to put into practice his imaginative ideas in the field of surgery, and with his obvious ability, good looks and considerable charm, he soon succeeded. At thirty-one he became a naturalised French citizen and was appointed Director of the Experimental Surgery Laboratory of the Collège de France.

He told me often that the years of hard work and little success at the laboratory were the happiest of his life. He encountered much opposition during the seventeen years before the First World War: sometimes it seemed to him that all French doctors were conservative to the point of reaction. But his combination of knowledge and personality helped him to win all the battles in the end.

His outlook was never narrowly scientific. His world was not bordered by the laboratory walls. He visited the art galleries

of Paris regularly; he never missed a performance of Sarah Bernhardt or the Brothers Cocqueline at the *Comédie Française*. Art, music, literature, the theatre . . . in his mind they all had their place in a surgeon's life, for he believed that a surgeon must be partly an artist.

Paris at this time was the centre of an artistic renaissance. Serge Voronoff made friendships that were to last: Maurice Maeterlinck, Sarah Bernhardt, Jean Richpein, Duse, Rostand, Arthur Nikish, Monet and many others. In their company, he forgot his work completely. It was one of his characteristics never to 'talk shop'. In the laboratory, he was obsessed by his experiments; outside it, he was the opposite of the conventional absent-minded scientist.

This characteristic struck me the first time I met Voronoff, during the summer of 1931. We were both staying at Carlsbad; we were both Russians living outside our country; he was a surgeon, and I was a writer, but we found we had much in common. Over the next four weeks we became very friendly. We talked about many things and all the time I was expecting him to tell me something about his work: I thought it might perhaps provide an original theme for a play. But he seemed much more interested in my life and work; it wasn't until the last day of our holiday, when we were walking together in the woods overlooking the Spa, that he suddenly said: 'I'm grateful to you for not being inquisitive.'

I said, 'To be frank with you, I've been itching to ask you a lot of questions.'

He grinned. 'Perhaps you have in mind a play set in a doctor's laboratory?'

I nodded.

'Go ahead,' said Voronoff.

'But I must know what goes on in the laboratory,' I said.

With a sweep of his hand he took in the trees, the sky and the mountains. 'This all lives as a man lives,' he said, 'breeding, enjoying life, growing old and dying. In nature it is simpler. Leaves falling on the earth around the tree seed the roots of an old tree, and give that tree a new strength, a longer life. With human beings, a surgeon must do this—stimulus—to the old body. That is what I have been trying to do for more than thirty years. The most important part of a human being is the glands . . . they provide the life-spark, like the magneto in a motor-car.'

All at once he seemed distant. 'I'm sure one day the world of science will recognise this,' he continued, 'and, if I'm still alive

then, I will at least know that I haven't fought in vain. You cannot achieve anything without a struggle. I remember how unhappy I was back in 1917 when I read my first thesis at the Sorbonne. They called me a charlatan.'

He turned to me with a smile. 'As a playwright, you must know how it feels if nobody recognises you. It is a disappointment, but disappointment often gives us more impetus to go on with a greater belief in our ideas.'

Two weeks later, there arrived at my Vienna flat a parcel from Voronoff. Inside were three books, published in Germany. They explained the various stages of Voronoff's work, the mistakes, disappointments and successes, and I saw him as a man of superb enthusiasm, pursuing his goal relentlessly.

What first brought Voronoff's mind to gland-grafting? I discovered the answer in the books he had sent me.

In the First World War he was appointed Surgeon-in-Chief to the Russian Hospitals in Paris and Bordeaux. The terrible injuries of the wounded who passed through these hospitals led him to think in terms of something quite new: the grafting of bones from one human being to another. These operations proved to be completely successful, and Voronoff was reminded of his experiments with sheep. By grafting glands from one sheep to another, he increased their size, weight and the quality of their wool.

These two successes provided him with an even more revolutionary idea—the grafting on to human beings of healthy glands from a similar type of animal, the monkey.

'Monkey glands!' So began one of the newspaper sensations of the twenties. The widespread publicity distressed Voronoff. 'This is pure sensationalism,' he told me once. 'They are trying to turn me into a fairground exhibit, missing the important aspects of my work. I am not concerned with immortality: if these operations can provide people with renewed vigour and vitality, if they can add just one year to a person's life, surely this is an achievement?'

Voronoff was a modest and an honest man. He was also wealthy: he had no need to make money from 'monkey glands'.

Do 'monkey glands' work? I don't think there is any doubt of it: and in the end most of the medical profession have recognised this.

Voronoff's aim was never to make men live as long as Methuselah, but he achieved the first stage of a modern miracle.

I remember the case of a renowned and ageing writer, who started a new book and, after completing three chapters, was too tired and dispirited to go on. Voronoff performed the 'monkey-gland' operation on him, and the great work was finished in vigour and good health. The effects of this operation lasted ten years.

Just before the Second World War, Voronoff turned his attention to the problem of cancer. The war interrupted his work, and he left his laboratory at the Château Grimaldi in Mentone for America.

With the liberation of France he returned to Mentone, and turned his château into a hospital for the wounded. His experiments could wait; his immediate task was to help the soldiers. Although approaching eighty, he performed many plastic operations himself.

' His energy was amazing. He drove himself ruthlessly, as if he knew that this was his last chance to serve humanity. He did not believe in retirement. He worked all hours in the hospital, rushed to Paris frequently in his dark red Rolls-Royce for meetings of the Society of Science, and then hurried back again to Mentone to continue his work. The letters I received from him over the past few years were written in the same bold, strong hand as twenty years earlier.

Voronoff was never too busy to help anyone in distress. I wrote to him six months ago about an eight-year-old child I knew in London who had suddenly been taken ill with diabetes.

I had a letter back by return of post. 'I am sorry,' wrote Voronoff, 'that I cannot help the child personally—diabetes is not my special line. However, I am writing today to a pupil of mine in Rome, who is now one of the greatest specialists on diabetes in the world. I know he will examine the child.'

Serge Voronoff was, I think, a great man, not because of his work alone, but because of the effect he had on everyone with whom he came into contact. He did

not know prejudice; he did not moralise; he did not try to teach people how to live. In his company, it was impossible to feel anything but young, even without 'monkey-glands'. As one distinguished Frenchman put it: 'If he weren't so tall, we would never know that this was the *great* Professor Voronoff.'

Only once in his life was he really unhappy. That was when his greatest friend, Maurice Maeterlinck, died. Voronoff said: 'Perhaps now he is with his Blue Bird.'

A month before Voronoff died, I received a copy of his last book, *Du Cretin au Genie*, which outlines a new way of providing backward children with normal minds by glandular operation.

This is a fascinating book, not only from the point of view of great surgical achievements, but as an example of an unbelievable span of study of the human mind and body through the life and activities of great philosophers, poets and thinkers.

What a mixture of personalities! Beethoven, Swift, Raphael, Newton, Leonardo da Vinci, Darwin, Mozart, Carlyle, Tolstoi; Nietzsche and Schopenhauer; Goethe and Humboldt: Walter Scott and Voltaire; Coleridge, Chopin, George Sand, Pasteur and Descartes.

He is not satisfied only with modern thinkers; he goes back to Moses, Buddha, Socrates, Copernicus and Bacon. Reading this book of Voronoff, one realises how, by prolonged study, he arrived at his theory 'from cretinism to genius'.

Voronoff differed from many surgeons in the way in which he unremittingly searched for confirmation of his theories, not only in performing operations based on experiments with the human body, but through logical research among the ideas of spiritual visionaries.

Illustrative of this are two of the most fascinating parts of the book. The first deals with Voronoff's study of the work of Newton, who established 'a mutual dependence between the elements of this vast universe; each part reacts to all the others, the smallest atom attracting others without choice or preference.'

Voronoff explains this theory of Newton with an enthusiastic remark: 'The greatness of Newton's work, the immensity of his thought, shows us to what heights the human spirit can rise. What wonderful power is possessed by the human mind!'

In the second instance Voronoff deals with Darwin, whose theory served him as a basis for his 'sensational' surgical research in the field of rejuvenation.

After making a vivid analysis of Darwin's works, Voronoff considers that his (Darwin's) conclusions and theories—the result of a million observations, 'opened new horizons for the study of heredity, not only in animals, but in man, whose origin in the darkness of Time brought them close to a common ancestor, something both monkey and man.'

I have quoted these extracts from Voronoff's book to show how he equated the work of Newton the astronomer, and Darwin the anthropologist, to justify the logic of his own research and action. He was a pioneer surgeon who worked with new means, a new medium which followed the pattern of a great vision—a vision that saw the human body through the combined focus of mind and spirit. He was not only a surgeon-poet, as I said before, but a surgeon - philosopher - mathematician, a craftsman with a superb artistry for transmuting theory into practice, a man who foresaw a world where science was at the service of mankind.

Sixty years of ceaseless effort lay behind him, but to the end he worked for this ideal with his youthful vigour undiminished. It was only when I read the obituary notices that I really knew his age.

MARY BUTTS

LOUIS ADEANE

MARY Francis Butts died on 5 March 1937. She left behind her a small flurry of regret in the reviewers' columns and ten books which, when the flurry had fallen away, were revealed as being out of print. She flits elusively through most of the memoirs of the period and escapes with a single scratch from the pages of *The Apes of God*; the pattern of her life is interesting, not merely because it includes her work, but because of its deviations from a larger pattern, the literary life of her time. Ford Madox Ford thought she had genius, and indeed her writing is brilliant enough to prompt an inquiry concerning its value and its long neglect.

She reviewed her early years in *The Crystal Cabinet*, a vivid, unshapely book whose accuracy as to detail has since been questioned. Her family had come originally from Norfolk (a Robert Butts was Bishop of Ely in the eighteenth century), but her father bought a small country-house on the shore of Poole Harbour, Dorset, and as an elderly man he settled there. Salterns had little architectural distinction, but it was of some account in the neighbourhood and had extensive gardens. His daughter was born on 13 December 1893, and the place gave a quality of further estrangement to her rather lonely childhood. She says that in the pinewood she was possessed by 'panic' fear; in the Lavender Walk she saw an unexplained Lady dressed in black. One is given an impression of her glancing figure, red-haired, among the trees of the orchard, or pausing to peer into one of the fourteen wells; or halted at a window, her stance like that of 'a small archaic statue', where she might watch a Channel storm whip the water and pour up through the woods to turn the grasses on the hills behind the house. On dark days the rooms were lit by tall candles, the hall, with its staircase on three sides, by a pendant candelabrum. There were many objects of indefinite value but illimitable fascination: 'Silver and musical instruments and little old pictures of battles on copper, and brass polished to the colour of pale gold . . .'; mirrors, toys of ivory, watches, ebony boxes, miniatures, seals of cornelian and beryl and amethyst. There were some early Ming vases, rose and white, contributed by the Bishop of Ely, and there were thirteen chiming clocks. Unhappily, only Captain Butts understood the keys of these clocks, so that, at his death, they all ran down.

Apparently he was scholarly and stern, a friend of Rossetti, with a reticence which was 'his form of pride. His desire was to omit, until, through omission itself, something appeared that had classic line and distinction.' In his later years he had little to do with his children, but earlier he taught his daughter Greek and told her stories from Homer, and thus the emotional complexity and richness of her life was taken up and expressed sytematically. From the first she interpreted the world in terms of Gods, demons and heroes, and this view, together with a concurrent attempt at proportion and formal simplicity, conditioned all her work. At this period also, her intense apprehension of alien but living forces within and without herself was formalised in terms of the occult, and her interest in magic and witchcraft received its first impetus. She was impressed by the ideal of chivalry, though she found it in a somewhat debased form: *The Three Musketeers* was a significant addition to her early reading.

Captain Butts' grandfather had been that Thomas Butts to whom Blake's letter begins:

> To my Friend Butts I write
> My first Vision of Light . . .

the patron to whom a collection of sketches, engravings, works in tempera and watercolour, even Blake's engraving cabinet, had passed. The Blake Room at Salterns

housed these things (later they were bought by the Tate Gallery), and their presence contributed to the saturation of the child's mind with arcane imagery; at the age of seven she had expressed a preference for the book of Revelation in the Bible, saying that she understood it perfectly. Later on in Shelley, Spenser and Milton she found a language of symbol which she felt was in some way her own.

Soon after her father's death she was sent to school at St. Andrews on the coast of Fife. She did not adapt herself very happily to school life, but by reaction, her decision to become a writer was confirmed. So was her facility for self-dramatisation. The veil of dreams hardened into armour, and once the knight's habiliment had been assumed, it was necessary to have an opponent and a cause. A misapplied missionary fervour, occasioned by her prolonged squabbles with her relatives, often had an unfortunate effect on her work.

She studied for three years at London University, and the outbreak of war found her working for a Children's Care Committee at Hackney. She wrote her first novel, *Ashe of Rings*. She married and had a daughter, but a little later she left her husband and child in England and went to France, where she was to remain, intermittently, for the next ten years. Though she pursued the contemporary 'good time' with contemporary zest, by the beginning of the 'twenties she had formed attitudes in opposition to at least three of its main trends. Her hostility to surrealism(dadaism, as she describes it) and psychoanalysis sprang from a feeling that they reflected a split between parts of the self within, and the natural order of the world without. Her view that the universe has intrinsic meaning is implied in the novel just mentioned:

'Christianity is a way, a set of symbols, in part to explain and to make men endure, the unutterable pain that is in the world. There are other sets, like chessmen. But only one game.'

She found a number of friends in the shifting world of the Parisian exiles, and became attracted by two circles whose orbits often overlapped. It is possible that she had met Ford Madox Ford in England during the war; in Paris she was rapidly drawn into his entourage, and she sometimes took her work to him for criticism. She said later that Ford had taught her to write short stories. She was also strongly influenced by the personality of Jean Cocteau, and she was acquainted with many eminent writers and artists who were in France at that time.

She also mixed with people who were more truly called the Lost Generation. It was the fashion, as Romer Wilson remarks, for everyone to be young, masculine and square, but though Mary Butts conformed to some extent to these requirements, they did not handicap either her emotional munificence or her physical beauty which, alternating between the gorgeous and the stilled, seems to have been remarkable in its power, as if for moments she had become her own goddess-ideal. Flaring with enthusiasm, her pale face lit by her red-gold hair, she moved from party to party, gathering round her a changing group of Russian emigrés, decayed aristocrats, college boys and cosmopolitan queers, to all of whom she radiated maternal sympathy and with all of whom she intrigued, quarrelled and was reconciled with more than customary conviction. Though she considered dadaism an evil thing, she was not averse to taking drugs and dabbling in 'black magic'. Indeed she appears to have tried almost every method of heightening or distorting consciousness, partly for its own sake but chiefly for her purposes as a writer. She had to be in the swim, having been born on the bank. If sometimes she seemed a bit bedraggled, this at least bore witness to her courage and generosity. The background to her stage was the 'other Paris' of whose silence and horror Poe speaks, and which is evoked with mastery in her own story, 'Mappa Mundi'.

During these years she had been working hard and was achieving a reputation with her short stories. She visited Austria, Germany and Italy, and spent some time at Villefranche. The south of France lends a background to some of her work, notably her most memorable story, *The Houseparty*. In 1928 she returned to England and set up a kind of salon near Regent's Park; after a further period in Montparnasse she married for the second time and

in 1932 retired to Sennen Cove in Cornwall, where she was to live until her sudden death at the age of forty-four.

Mary Butts began by writing poetry. It was never collected, and its main importance for us is that the technical discipline involved clearly affected her prose to a great degree. When in 1929 the *Little Review* asked a number of writers what they looked forward to, Mary Butts replied: 'A poet's success'. She had something of this success: the first thing to impress the reader of her work is the pointed, exact and concentrated style, with its strongly-marked rhythms and its frequent use of poetic allusion. It is brilliant with visual imagery, and if at first sight it seems obscure, this is because it is dazzling; dazzling the senses, it traps the intellect into close attention. Descriptive passages, in which a prose writer usually becomes discursive, are taut and purposeful; and as separable stretches of writing, they are rare. Disconnected scenes are knitted rapidly into the reader's single awareness, so creating a continuously-changing 'situation'; each paragraph, like each line of a poem, is the centre of a web whose threads reach out through the whole work. This method is the fitting expression of her narrow, deeply-felt and coherent vision of life. The style of her non-fictional writing seems to have been influenced superficially by that of Charles Williams, with whose outlook and temperament she had something in common.

The world she describes is the nomadic world she knew, the shifting underground life of every big city, a population moving uneasily across Europe, carrying with it the professional emigré, the political agent, the corrupted artist, the precious and the betrayed—in brief, the world of the lost. There is an affinity between her characters and Mr. Norris. During the 'twenties a crack or heave in the social structure enabled the writer to meet the nomads; ten years later a novelist had to go out and find these once-fashionable figures; after another decade the real exiles were to come the same way, giving significance to their predecessors. Edwin Muir once deprecated the effect of the fashionable in Mary Butts' first novel. Certainly it is damaging to find young men in another powdering their faces before descending to dinner; it is irritating to meet a girl who 'came into breakfast like a pale glass cup with a nasturtium in it.' But these are extreme instances of the fashionable, which is served elsewhere in a less precious, if cheaper, manner. 'The cocktails tasted as if they had been shaken in terror'; or: 'Over the house, through the sparkling air, the bronze note of a clock rang, like a body falling bound into deep water.' Such phrases have felicity of a kind, and often the very transitoriness of this surface view, the world described, increases by contrast the permanence of the world evoked.

The world evoked, the other level of meanings, provides the real background in most of what she wrote. She thought that 'we are spectators of a situation which is the mask for another situation, that existed perhaps in some remote age, or in a world that is outside time.' By various means—by a stylisation of form, in *Armed with Madness*, by the intrusion of the occult in her first novel, by a heightening of the sense of place, race, tradition, in *Death of Felicity Taverner*—the presence of that other world is implied. Appearances, for her, are copies of reality; life is a dome of many-coloured glass. The structure and movement of nearly all her work depends on this dichotomy: the characters are usually divided—sometimes too neatly—between the sheep and the goats; there is conflict between them or between truth and error in the mind of a single character. Her theme gave her the opportunity to make her unique contribution to literature, the near communication in words of an occult experience, the evocation of abnormal states of mind. For moments when reading her work, one's life seems twisted out of focus. The effect is achieved cumulatively; the process by which a shadow becomes alive and malignant, or a tree differentiates itself from a wood, is a delicate but convincing one. It is convincing partly because the experience of reading this tense allusive prose is itself a preparation for such alchemy; the mind is gradually set on fire, made aware; disbelief is suspended.

In an essay on Huxley, Mary Butts points out that his novels are really

masques; to a lesser degree, this is true of her own three novels. Though in a letter she calls *Ashe of Rings* a ragged, passionate book, these qualities do not disturb the reader; the fault lies in that woodenness which attends most novels of a didactic kind, in which the characters become figures in a dance arranged from the outside by the author. *Ashe of Rings* is about a house and a piece of land, fixed points dominating the characters, whose actions thus become a projection of the past into the present. The house and family history exert an almost magical influence upon the heirs. Actual witchcraft is used by one person against another, but more impressive is the sustained atmosphere of evil and the evocation of the wartime wasteland in which the characters live. (Incidentally, this is one of the first modern novels to deal with persons 'on the run' from military service.) In saying that the book treats with an evil mother, a gentlemanly seducer, a brother-sister relationship on the edge of incest, and so on, one is confessing that it is really a sophisticated melodrama. The writer fails to realise her intention completely, and the book remains, as she says, a kind of grim fairy story.

It is disappointing to find that in *Armed with Madness* the didactic device has been exchanged for one of an even more rigid kind. Here a number of young people in a country-house find a cup which represents for them the Sanc Grail. The cup is lost, the group searches, splits up, and some of the members return to the starting-point. This story, in which every figure is invested with definite single qualities—worldliness, courtesy, kindness—is intended to be a modern recapitulation of the Grail legend, with each character a knight. The deliberate movement of the book sometimes suggests a page-by-page translation of the legend into the writer's terms; but some arbitrary departures from convention help to cause confusion, as does the author's obvious struggle to deploy many more characters than she can handle. As an attempt to integrate the Grail myth into modern literature, it is a failure.

Probably this was recognised by Mary Butts, who in her third novel employed the same characters and setting in a much more subtle play on the Grail theme. To her purpose she adapted as much as she could of the detective-story technique; but though the book is 'an intellectual shocker of the first order', as a reviewer said, it is also a great deal more. Here the earlier battle between good and evil is fought again, this time with a more convincing armoury and with knights more mature. In this case the 'truth', or the Grail, is represented by Felicity Taverner, who has died in mysterious circumstances abroad. The task of her friends is to find out how and why she died. When this question is answered, emphasis shifts from Felicity's death to her life, and it becomes necessary to protect her reputation and interests. Finally the stress falls on the preservation of these interests in their material projection—the house and land where Felicity had lived. Thus, as the seekers advance and the Grail recedes, the figure of the dead woman lives with increasing intensity; the ideal Felicity, whom the reader never meets, is the dominating and most memorable influence in the book. The forces of evil are represented by Kralin, who opposes the seekers at every step, attempting finally to blackmail them into selling the land for cheap building; though vulgarised by his attachment to the Russian secret service (a deplorable intrusion of fashion), Kralin is a convincing and even subtly-drawn figure, equal to his position as foil to Felicity. In frustrating him, the seekers find the Grail—but only within a material category, the land and the local pattern of culture which is preserved being merely a representation of Felicity herself. One does not meet Felicity undisguised. This description of the story is too neat to convey properly the subtlety and depths of implication it has to offer. *Death of Felicity Taverner* has superficial faults of the kind noticed in Mary Butts' other work, but as a whole it is satisfying and valuable.

Most of her short stories deal with aspects of the world she presents in her novels. Within this small vivid sphere she made mistakes, and many stories are marred by the high colouring given to personal feeling and fugitively 'period' elements. It was inevitable that she should have admired the work of M. R. James, and one of her

ghost stories, 'With or Without Buttons' (*Last Stories*) is equal to almost anything written by the master himself. Other pieces in the same volume deal admirably with the gently corrupt and with the more pitiful aspects of the 'twenties wasteland. 'The Houseparty' (*Several Occasions*) has received from time a dimension of satirical cruelty probably not intended by its author, but within its own terms it is the most detached and best balanced of her stories, a hard and beautiful piece of work.

The Macedonian and *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* are interpretations of the mental climate of the classical world, and of an ideal of human greatness. Alexander and Cleopatra are cast, perhaps, in too heroic a mould, but the metal itself is not cheapened. If the writing is less sensuous than in the earlier books, it is apt to its end, and there are some adroit pieces of construction and several powerful climactic scenes.

Mary Butts' intention as a creative writer was to present, on the one hand, a view of the contemporary wasteland, and to suggest, on the other, the presence of a supernatural order. Her achievement was slightly different. The value of her fiction lies in the momentary evocations of the abnormal, the insights into character, and the allusive wit. Her attempt to translate a traditional view of life more largely into contemporary terms was partially successful and must take a lesser place.

The reasons for the neglect of her writing will now be obvious. A 'personality' of the early 'twenties, she matured later as a novelist, and her expressions of belief in the validity of mystical experience (which had led her to Anglo-Catholicism) and of a preference for an aristocratic social order, were not likely to seem acceptable to the following generation. She died before she had completely overcome those defects mentioned previously, and probably before she had fully realised her powers; she was too individual a writer to influence others, unless perhaps Elizabeth Bowen learned something from her tone of voice. She was given to emotional sophistry and struck attitudes which even to her contemporaries must have seemed odd, but she also had a sort of innocence which, though it required these elaborate and exasperating self-defences, frequently made itself known with intense and singular clarity, so that her best work still merits serious attention. Perhaps for some readers her mystical vision will seem the most valuable point of her life and writing, as she would have wished.

The fullest recollections of Mary Butts are given by Douglas Goldring in *South Lodge* and *The Nineteen Twenties*. Much of my material was kindly given me by her friends; my gratitude is due especially to Mr. Hugh Ross Williamson, who gave me access to the letters I have quoted.

LOVE IS AN OUTLAW

Love is an outlaw that cannot be held
Within the small confines and laws of man
Rather it will turn, as a planet can,
Man upside down like a first line fabled
In a note-book lightly pencilled upon
To change his sense of direction. Dimpled
Wisely like an unbridled child love is pebbled
With smooth water and myths: like a glazed swan
Shadowed in reeds: A ray of light waylaid
On swiftly moving motes: wholesome love attends
Its own shape, warm and shining. The man who tends
The herds and street lamps symbols of its trade.
It is a pacing Genesis on two legs
Possessing man who unapparelled begs.

LYNETTE ROBERTS

5

No one can experience with indifference *the impact of Böcklin's Art*

ARNOLD BÖCKLIN

1827—1901

ROBIN IRONSIDE

THE standard response of enlightened taste to the paintings of Böcklin is still one largely of disgust. Such a response, however, is unlikely to bring his art into neglect, and even illustrates its abiding vitality. The fundamental bi-polarity of emotions is now a familiar concept. We are no longer affronted by the notion that hatred is a lurking component of our loves, and we may fruitfully assume that our aesthetic reactions, like our passions (if an aesthetic reaction is not itself a passion), are characterised by the same ambivalence. Where there is disgust, we may say, there is also relish. Indifference, the indifference of centuries is the only absolute test of an artist's insignificance, and a single lifetime is sufficient to disprove the validity of the mere revulsions of taste. Nobody can ever have experienced with indifference the impact of Böcklin's art. The recoil may be sharp, but the most sensitive spectator will be the most reluctant, the least able, to turn away, before he has savoured to the full the unpleasantness of the initiation. Visitors to the Museum at Basel, the most important repository of his art, can hardly fail to be impressed by the elevating realism of the famous Holbeins in this collection, but, unless they are inhibited by the tyranny of an indoctrinated taste, they will also grasp the opportunity of a plunge into the psychological cloaca in which the fantasies of Böcklin were nourished.

The power of these fantasies has at all times received a measure of admiration from the Germanic peoples. The enthusiasms, however, of which the Germanic temperament is capable, have not often been hampered by the restraints of taste. It is a temperament which does not recognise disgust as a reasonable or sufficient deterrent to the expansion of its sympathy. There can be no doubt that its independence in this respect has been richly rewarded. The expressionism inherent in German art has been the motive force of its peculiar triumphs. Though the *Galgenhumor* in which Germany's Gothic artists delighted may easily pall, and the crudities in our own day of Beckmann or Schmidt-Rottluf seem more tedious than shocking, the art of Gruenewald, of Bosch, of Permoser or of Nolde is an irresistible vindication of the Germanic spirit's innate rejection of the problems of aesthetic propriety. Böcklin, at his most vigorous, rejected such problems wholeheartedly; and, after due exposure to the prescriptive phase of material distress and public contempt to which nineteenth-century artists were normally exposed at the outset of their career, his fellow-countrymen took him to their bosom. By the time his life was drawing to a close, his name had become a household word throughout the German-speaking world. The force of his visionary power was freely compared to that of Goethe and Nietzsche; Wagner pressed him to place his art at the service of the Bayreuth Theatre; and, on his seventieth birthday, national celebrations were organised both in Switzerland, the country of his birth, and in Germany. His posthumous renown inevitably waned as the prestige of the Parisian school increased, but at the very height of the French ascendancy, German criticism might choose to dignify Böcklin as a 'case' rather than dismiss his art as the expression of an outmoded representational ideal.

Beyond the frontiers of the Germanic world, the light of Böcklin's fame was never greater than a mere reflection of his domestic glory. He was a prophet only in his own country. He appears to have liked, even to have sought, this distinction.

He never attempted to exhibit his paintings in France and resisted pressure from his friends to do so on the grounds that he had no desire to be admired by the French. This resistance might well have been the expression of an instinctive prudence, but in fact it is more likely to have been due to a dislike of France and the French, acquired as a student in Paris where he had suffered the worst afflictions of *une vie de Bohème*, unrelieved by any of its delights. In the circumstances, the record of contemporary French reactions to the painting of Böcklin is necessarily slight. A single article in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* acknowledged the artist's eminence in his own country. His painting must certainly have been offensive to the average taste of educated Parisians, and it is much to be regretted that they were never given an opportunity of indulging their repugnance. A Böcklin exhibition in Paris at the height of the Wagnerian controversy would have been an interesting event. The aestheticism which flourished at that moment in France was not insensitive to the romantic appeal of *les barbares Germanies*, and in Symbolist and near-Symbolist circles, voices would have been raised in the Swiss painter's defence. Joséphin Peladan, the critic, or rather the High Priest, both of esoteric and exotic art forms, is reported to have given a little jump and a great cry on being confronted for the first time—in the Basel Museum—with Böcklin's art. This response was the spontaneous expression of amazed distaste and disapproval. Peladan, however, was something of a sensationalist, and after further contemplation, his initial disapproval was extinguished by a more powerful feeling of awe. His reactions certainly suggest that Böcklin's painting would have produced an eruptive effect in Paris, both on those who were irrevocably repelled and on those whose distaste was a premonitory symptom of latent gratification.

The conspicuous, the most productive quality of Böcklin's vigorous imagination was the power to visualise the world of mythological antiquity with such compelling verisimilitude that its impossible inhabitants, its satyrs, centaurs and tritons subsist, not as poetic accessories or even as suggestive symbols, but as hitherto unnoted, somewhat unpleasant natural phenomena. We may easily feel that Böcklin was a man whose instinctual nature was in a state of repressed rebellion against the pressures of civilised life, a condition which might in some measure be relieved by the harmless liberation of his fancy in the service of art. After an attack of typhoid in 1859, he endured a mental recidivation to a state of infancy, putting out his tongue at anyone on the street whom he fancied might be staring at him and kissing any others who approached him with a friendly greeting. He did no work during the period of his convalescence; and perhaps the passionate energy he otherwise expended on the imaginative re-creation of a primitive world in which half-animal, half-human creatures led a life of wild impulse, served to protect him from atavistic displays of a less desirable kind. At any rate, his most effective pictures reveal an amoral lust for life, a blissful ignorance of those Saturnian sublimities in which painters' dreams of 'the morning of the world' are usually arrayed; and the motions of his fabulous monsters are more like the antics occasionally to be observed in an aquarium or a zoo than anything to which mythological convention has accustomed us. They may hold the attention at first as though they were something that had escaped from a fair, but the abandonment of their mood, their comfortable relationship to the surrounding landscape belies this impression. It becomes clear that they are disporting themselves in their native haunts, that they have, at all times, been an occult feature of the landscape; and the lasting impression produced by Böcklin's peculiar revelation of their presence is one of disturbing strangeness, a strangeness induced by the absolute palpability of their monstrosity. A similar sensation might be aroused by a sudden awareness that our eyes had deceived us, that what, for example, we had accepted as a fallen tree-trunk, was in fact a slumbering hippogriff. Pan in the paintings of Böcklin is no more than a stone or a clump of reeds until the talismanic moment in which he turns his head to throw a baleful gaze upon the unsuspecting wayfarer, and from that

moment the god and his dissolute satellites invest the scene with a rudimental energy in which man and beast participate without distinction or hindrance. The wanton frolics of the sea provided Böcklin with the ideal setting for the exhibition of this energy. The most persuasive of his fabulous evocations are conceived *im Spiel der Wellen*; and the organic plausibility of his satyrs, remarkable as it would appear in any other conjunction, seems a relative feat beside the representational triumph of his marine fauna. The Triton is the particular monster he would have wished to be. He depicts the ribald gambols of this creature with a degree of confidence and zest which seems only to have been evoked in him by the conjurations of the ocean. Its mate, the Böcklinian naiad, stout, pug-nosed, her complexion lashed to scarlet by the assaults of the spray, is a beast brimming with hilarious desires; in his idylls of the sea, the artist has mostly shown her at play, leaping like a salmon or heaving like a seal, but always with a human eye on the pursuant male, whose unabashed concupiscence is only preserved from impossible exposure by the fortuitous surging of the billows. Böcklin was more rarely inspired by the repose of these aquatic beings, but the vision of a recumbent naiad furnished the theme of the *Meeresstille*, a picture which has been accounted his masterpiece. The massive, lethargic heroine of this work, gorged, as it might be, with fish, is represented as emerging from a state of torpor. With a somnambulistic gesture, she casts off the lingering effect of a disturbing dream. She is herself a disturbing figure; the menace in her eye might betoken the calculations of an unscrupulous sexuality if it could possibly be supposed that her appetites, of whatever kind, still craved satisfaction. In her luxuriant quiescence, she resembles a marine vegetable; she might easily, out of sheer satiety, become exanimate while we look at her. She is already the resting-place of sea-birds. Soon she will be at one with the flora of the rock on which she lies. We may say of her that she has been, in the past, a diver in deep seas, and there trafficked in strange loves. The reptile coiled about her rocky couch is surely the progeny of her commerce.

Böcklin was the master of a truly grotesque art; without lapsing into wit, without pitying or wincing, but with rich sympathy he was able to visualise the aberrant, the prodigious, the denaturalised, as in very truth the sports of Nature. Of this element of the grotesque in his conceptions, he was undoubtedly unconscious wherever it is effective. He made various deliberate essays in the grotesque vein, but the results were in each case feebly humorous. Böcklin's contemporaries revered him chiefly as the allegorical poet of classical antiquity. He did not refuse this homage, and it is clear that, in his opinion, classicism was a dominant characteristic of his art. It was under the ban of this conviction (in which there was no hypocrisy) that he rejected Wagner's appeals for collaboration. A discouraging representation of Fafner is the only Wagnerian subject he attempted. An incidental preference for the Greek myths to the Germanic sagas would hardly support a special claim to classical affinities, and the brute vivacity of Böcklin's mythological illustrations is anything but Attic in character. But, as an artist ridden by the time-honoured *Drang nach Süden*, Böcklin had a deeper reason for thinking of his work as an authentic expresion of classicism. He crossed the Alps not only in quest of a land of lemon trees, but also as an uproarious *Landsknecht* craving southern wine and southern sensuality, and most of all, as an ancient Vandal, delighted at the prospect of indulging his primitive urges in a congenial climate. Such was the inner nature, as revealed in his painting, of his claim to classicism; and it is an admissible claim. Of course, the Italian air exerted the usual softening influences on the savage intruder, and to these we may attribute a group of paintings inspired, it has been said, by Glück, whose *Orpheus* was one of Böcklin's favourite musical compositions. They display, as a Belgian admirer has put it, a wonderful sense of the *eurythmie des sites amènes*, a wonderful comprehension of the *rève hieratique que taisent les arbres*. The *Toteninsel*, the only work by Böcklin which achieved, and perhaps preserves, a world wide popularity, is the commanding expression of this strain of acquired refinement in his inspiration; the *site amène* in this instance bears a striking

resemblance to the Island of Ponticonissi near Corfu, but it is known that the actual motif was the Castel Alphonso, Ischia—a fact which could hardly have been established from the evidence of the picture alone. Böcklin painted four finished variants of the original version, all of which are extant. The avenue of giant cypresses which divides the island at the centre is usually regarded as no more than a valley of the shadow leading to the eternal sunlight of the Elysian Fields. This interpretation suits the earlier versions of the picture, but the almost gracious aspects of the island at this stage vanish in the beetling magnitude of its subsequent formation. The development of the conception is a regression from the vaguely Olympian to the vaguely atavistic. The cypress avenue in the latest variant is a passage-way not to Elysium but, more probably, to the abdomen of mother earth. Among the work associated with the mood of the first two versions of the *Toteninsel* are *Die Gefilde der Seeligen* and the *Lebensinsel*, both breathing the serenity of Glück's '*Quel nouveau Ciel*' and possibly inspired by the second act of *Orpheus*. Under the spell of such Elysian themes, Böcklin might chasten, without constraint, the impure vehemence of his imagery, but the pacification of the grotesque element is an impoverishment, and the surprising effect of reality in such a work as *Die Heilige Hain* is the effect, nevertheless, of a diluted, a censored reality, like that of a still from a historical film.

For Böcklin the artistic process was almost entirely psychological. His pictures ripened in his mind. The shapes were arranged, the colours blended, under the supervision of an inner eye. He rarely had recourse to the established ritual of the *croquis*, the *ébauche* and the *esquisse*. As a result, the purely plastic interest of his compositions is almost nil. It is probably true that, in pictorial composition, the abstract as opposed to the imaginative or conceptual, relationship of one form to another can only be harmoniously established by material experiment. On the other hand, there is always the risk that an artist, in the effort to requite his sense of pattern, will mislay the significance of his original idea among the improvements to his design carried out in preliminary sketches. At his best, Böcklin was evidently unconcerned with the 'harmonics' of formal composition. On the other hand, the disposition of the persons and objects to be represented, so as to stress, regardless of formal equilibrium, the emotive content of the conception, was an essential part of his procedure. It was probably, in many cases, intuitively accomplished; but, when accomplished at all, its value is manifest. The *Odysseus und Kalypso*, reproduced here, illustrates this mode of expression. It is a picture admirably composed, but to expound the virtue of its composition in terms of plastic values would be impossible. The contrast between the figure of the hero darkly silhouetted against the sea and the pale form of Calypso relieved against obscurity of the cavern is effective, not in any abstract sense, but as stressing the different natures of the protagonists and establishing the emotional tension between them, nor is the eloquence of the composition in this particular in anyway dependent upon the preliminary identification of the persons represented. Böcklin's aptitude for this kind of formal emphasis, his innate capacity for an almost excessive intensification of *Stimmung* were, unhappily, enfeebled by the cultural requirements of an environment in which his fame prospered steadily; the commissions for large-scale decoration which he accepted at the height of his career, were a waste of his power and the results attest his imperfect comprehension of the formal and intellectual difficulties of 'civic' art.

Though much of his strongest and most personal work was done after the age of forty the influence of success tended generally to adulterate the primitative exuberance of his natural gift. From the historical point of view, Böcklin belongs to that group of late nineteenth-century painters which included Puvis de Chavannes, Gustave Moreau, Watts and Burne Jones, a group which remained outside the Academic fold, but whose art was exposed to the dangerous fate—as it then was—of public acclamation. They were artists endowed with a natural gift for the imaginative visualisation of the mythic or legendary past but, as success caught up

with them, they were driven by cultural pressures to expound philosophy or assist religion in the execution of large-scale allegories to which their somewhat hermetic talents were totally unadapted. As a student in Paris, Böcklin was at one moment reduced, in the extremity of material distress, to the basic expedient of supplying the publishers of medical books with drawings of diseased or mis-shapen organs. When we consider the mediocrity of the religious or ethical conceptions on which, too often, his mature energies were expended, we may wish that the profane author of the *Meeresstille* could have acknowledged the benefit and tended the influence of such a youthful discipline.

* * *

The biography of Böcklin is a record, along familiar lines, of struggle, perseverance and eventual success in the pursuit of his vocation. His mother supported his youthful determination to adopt the profession of painter, and the force of her maternal affection was proof against the scornful opposition of her husband who was resolved that his son should go into business. Her resources, however, were insufficient to ensure a subsistence, and from his eighteenth to his thirty-third year he lived precariously on the most meagre professional earnings. On leaving school, in 1845, he became a student at the Düsseldorf Academy under Johann Wilhelm Schirmer. In 1847, he visited Brussels and Antwerp. During the autumn of the same year he continued his studies under Alexandre Calame at Geneva, but removed, early in 1848, to Paris. The moment was unpropitious for a struggling foreign artist in the French capital; lack of means compelled him to return to Basle and in this case he may have welcomed the excuse. But he suffered no doubts of the reality of his vocation, and, in 1850, he was able to go to Italy where he discovered scenes and associations, a climate and an atmosphere which gave a lasting impetus to his imagination. Of the forty-nine years of life which still remained to him, some thirty were spent in Italy. He married, in 1853, Angela Pascucci. She was powerless to assist him financially and his economic difficulties continued until 1860 when he was given a Professorship at the Weimar Art School. Thereafter, his circumstances slowly improved.

Böcklin had only one aspiration which might threaten his progress as a painter. This was a desire to fly, and he was recurrently absorbed in laborious investigation of the possibilities. He had no qualifications for putting his theories to the test, but he was not to be persuaded, except by experiment, that the assistance of trained technicians in this matter was indispensable. He made two such experiments in Florence. A neighbouring hill, known as the Campo Caldo, was rented for the purpose. From it he intended to launch himself into the air and here also the necessary apparatus was constructed. The work was carried out, with great difficulty, by the painter himself and his friends who used such expedients as most readily occurred to them for attaching the various parts. A sudden thunderstorm occurring at the very moment appointed for the test compelled the company to take refuge in a cottage at the base of the hill. The 'machine' may have been lifted from the ground by the violence of the weather, for it was discovered in fragments, after the storm had subsided, not far from the cottage in which its inventor was sheltering. Böcklin was not deterred from making the attempt once more. On the second occasion he was actually about to take off when a sudden impulse induced him to alight for a last glass of wine before leaving the earth. While he was draining this 'stirrup-cup' the apparatus was fatally damaged by a sudden puff of wind. The dangerous fragility of its structure could no longer be denied and the painter regretfully decided that he must abandon any hope of the practical realisation of his project.

Böcklin lived and worked in Florence from 1874 to 1885 when, largely for the sake of his children's education, he returned to Switzerland, settling in Zürich. His intimate friendship with Gottfried Keller dates from this period. He remained in Zürich for seven years only. Old age inspired him with a last yearning for Italy and, in his sixty-sixth year, he established himself for the remainder of his days in the neighbourhood of Florence. In 1895, he purchased the Villa Bellagio at San Domenico where, six years later, at the age of seventy-three, he died.

Meeresstille

Reproduced by permission of Kunstmuseum Bern

Spiel der Najaden (1886)

Reproduced by permission of Kunstmuseum Basel

Odysseus and Kalypso (1881–3) *Kunstmuseum Basel*

Der Heilige Hain (1882) *Kunstmuseum Basel*

Die Toteninsel (1880) *Kunstmuseum Basel*

This long, short story seems to me a tragic masterpiece. It is absolutely Italian in that we judge Ugo Gattegna's character and especially his love affair (if we can call it that) with Adele entirely from his behaviour. Ugo is a Tuscan landowner, living by himself in the Big House with his old housekeeper, Cesira. He has apparently ceased to take any interest in anything. An old friend, Gianni, takes refuge in his house. Ugo never asks him why he had to come, but as the war creeps closer, Ugo himself grows restless. He suddenly visits the Gattegna house in the nearby city. There he meets his cousin Adele, returns to see her again, and finally offers her and her family refuge with him

THE HOUSE HAS STARTED MOVING

GUGLIELMO PETRONI
continued

PART TWO

I

Only in this countryside inhabited by taciturn people whose spirit is alive and fertile can certain phenomena reach such proportions; yet, at the same time, outwardly, they do not lead to the confusion one would normally think. Just as a field of wheat is bent and disordered on a summer's evening when the sky is overcast and the air dark and clear, just as the stalks are ruffled and contorted almost without adding sound to the rustling of the wind, so in the hearts of lonely men any frightening news, or the announcement of inevitable disaster begins to struggle and take on gigantic forms; but the silence remains. Whoever does not know the country thoroughly cannot really understand how such uneasiness spreads collectively and is nourished like embers beneath the ashes, how it flares up suddenly, striking at everyone, entering every heart, where it remains for a long time if not for ever closed within each individual.

It wasn't the news built on air, the invented fears, but the aspect such things took when being passed from mouth to mouth, from village to village, even including the lesser cities, that would have most disconcerted a stranger. Stories were told of fabulous and far-off events which, if one wished to, one could check on in the daily papers and understand without too much effort or fantasy. But they were nevertheless spoken of as fantastic happenings which one could only believe with difficulty; and as a result they would become even more deeply impressed in the peasants' minds, and accepted with ease as a sad reality. The war was by now moving North and might even reach them; but with all their goodwill it was not easy for them to believe it; they would speak of it as something possible, but were all the more terrified of it in proportion to the need to rebel at the thought of its being a real possibility.

What was even more inexplicable was the fact that they felt the need to search out and inform themselves through indirect channels, more especially through those to whom they had never given much weight; everyone felt the need to listen to those whose information they eventually accepted, but with their accustomed mistrust. They needed to search for light among the very same men they considered least reliable; of them they would ask questions, would listen to their complicated reasoning, urging them to speak at greater length and as clearly as possible, desiring their most dispassionate opinions, then would go away shaking their heads as if they were still incredulous about what might happen, and, in fact, were perhaps really incredulous, but were also more impressed with what they had heard than if they had really had the power to believe it completely.

Nevertheless, each in his own way began to make his own calculations, testing the ground to find out the other's intentions: but it would happen that those who were asked would in turn ask; those from whom some counsel could be expected because they were reputed the sharpest were actually seeking counsel themselves, so that for the moment they all passed from not knowing which way to turn, to a state of absolute incredulity,

from incredulity to terror, from terror to hope, and their souls were in prey of a turmoil which each one hid from himself.

The countryside was uneasy. They worried about their gold; the peasants in those parts always possess a nice little bundle of gold trinkets, heavy and unwieldy, passed on from father to son, added to at each wedding, at each first communion. In their minds the men were already looking for safe hiding places, and their money, too, of which they now possessed more since the city had turned directly to them for food, had become a source of infinite worry and strange thoughts.

At the village shop, whereas they were all agreed that what he said was nothing but lies, that it was useless to listen to him: 'He's even been in jail, think of that!' they still tried to listen with sharp ears to what Pietrone chose to tell them.

'All you think about is hiding your belongings; instead it's yourselves you'll have to hide.'

'Yourselves,' Faldella would repeat.

'And why should we hide? What have we got to do with it?'

'Because when the Germans begin to retreat they'll want you and animals in your stables more than your belongings and your money.'

'More after men than money,' Faldella would say.

'Nonsense!' the peasants would answer, annoyed, yet without being able to hide their anxiety.

'Nonsense? You'll see if Pietrone invents things. You think I say these things just to gossip? Well, I say them to do you a favour, because it's the truth, because one of these days we'll all have to come to an understanding.'

'And the women?' someone asked.

'Ah, women. I don't know about women; I'll tell you in a few days; but think of your animals now, those are the ones to put in a safe place.'

'Put the animals in safety,' Faldella would repeat from behind Pietrone's shoulders.

'What do you know more than we do?'

'I know, I know, my friends; but you just do as you please.'

As the discussion became more animated, certain questions began to make way against infinite reticences; at about that time one of the men who counted most in the neighbourhood would turn up on the main road, and, as if by common accord, a tremendous silence would follow. Faldella would draw even closer to Pietrone and even they would stay, though they were evidently becoming nervous and beset with worries. The others, who were almost all on their feet for the discussion, would sit back down on the ground or the benches.

'Good evening,' the newcomer would say. 'And what were you talking about?'

'Ehm . . . ehm . . . '

'Have you lost your tongues? Don't let yourselves be worked up by too many speeches; there are people around who are too fond of gossiping, but it won't last long. We're the only ones who know how things really are—if you want information come to us. We say that better times are on the way, and soon, sooner than you imagine, you will know how the war is really going, and who's going to win. Don't be foolish, there are those who know what they're doing, and are doing it for you and for us.' After going on for a long time in this vein, they would conclude: 'and when we have won, the first to feel the benefits will be us, understand, just us', and they would then disappear to where they came from.

'Good night,' Pietrone would then say, the first to go off in the opposite direction, followed by his shadow.

'Are you going? Wait for me.'

'No, I'll see you in a few days.'

'In a few days,' Faldella would say.

The peasants would sit around for a moment still absorbed in their thoughts, then almost all together would go off silently, while the eldest would utter an exclamation towards the sky which in no way encouraged the others. The night would swallow these shirtless men; while all around the lights of the houses thinned out as the shutters were closed. 'Good night'.

II

Of the timber that had not been turned over from the Gattegna property no one spoke any more; everyone had forgotten

the episode except for Baccelli, who had lost his peace of mind in renouncing a really exceptional profit, in which he too would have participated, albeit on a smaller scale, and he now went around, cursing in his heart the incomprehensible strangeness of the last Gattegna.

Pietrone too had not forgotten, and for more than a week had been thinking of a way of making use of the episode to speak to Gattegna. It was very difficult for him to establish relations with the owner of the Big House; he knew no one who had actually exchanged a few words with him; but Pietrone had that fixed idea in his head and was slowly formulating a plan to bring it to fulfilment.

When, after a few days, he presented himself at the kitchen door of the Big House, he was received with cold amazement and undisguised resentment by Cesira who stared at him with hostility.

'Excuse me, may I come in?'

Cesira went on looking at him; she too, like everyone else, knew Pietrone a little, and though she had never had any contact with him, many times she had seen him around the countryside or at the store, and his visit seemed rather strange.

'What do you want, Pietrone?'

Pietrone, with his cap in hand, came into the kitchen almost timidly; but sure of his broad voice, made no preamble:

'I would like to speak to Signor Ugo, just a few words, but it's something important. His refusal to allow the cutting of timber in his wood has been badly received by certain people; he might find himself in trouble.'

'What trouble?'

'They say he's against; and with those people, with people who think that way, there's no joking, especially nowadays.'

Cesira would never have been able to admit that the Gattegnas could find someone who could cause them trouble, but at such hints she too felt disturbed.

'I don't know anything,' she said, 'but it's all a lot of gossip. How could master Ugo want to listen to such foolishness?'

'But you tell him I need to speak to him.'

'You?'

'Yes, me.'

'He hasn't come down yet. If you really want me to tell him, come back this afternoon.'

After lunch Cesira briefly informed them that a certain man of the neighbourhood wanted to speak to the master, and went on out without waiting for an anwer; then, a little while later, she came back to say that the man had come back.

'Who, Cesira?'

'That Pietrone.'

'Who is he?'

'I don't know him.'

'And he really wants to speak to me?' said Ugo, looking questioningly at Gianni.

'But if he wants to speak to you, have him come in,' said Gianni.

'If he really wants to speak to me, let him in.'

Pietrone came in with his cap in hand, walking with careful steps and a smile which revealed tiny, closely-set teeth absolutely out of proportion with either his enormous body or the big rustic face on which the smile seemed almost sinister, if not a little funny.

Ugo did not know him, did not remember ever having seen him, but realising he was a peasant, made a pleasant gesture for him to come nearer.

'Excuse me for coming in here, but I wanted to warn you of something which I must say to you privately.'

'Go right ahead, my friend can stay and listen.'

'I wanted to say . . . You know, I listen to many different kinds of people, and the other day, the man who is bossing the neighbourhood because he can do so now, at least for the time being, was speaking of you down at the store, saying you had forbidden the cutting of timber because it was to be used for fortifications. You know, I can say it to you frankly, I don't think the same way they do, and so I thought it might be best if I came and told you; these are ugly times, and those people are more dangerous than one thinks; they're capable of anything if they single out a person.'

Ugo was listening without answering and Pietrone found himself stuck in the middle of the room.

'Sit down.'

'Thank you.'

'You might like a glass of wine.'

'Yes,' said Pietrone.

'And as for what you've heard, don't let it worry you.'

There was a moment's silence, then the man went on:

'It's always better to be careful, to be ready.'

'Ready?'

'Yes, yes.'

'Thank you, thank you,' said Ugo, and the conversation for him would have ended there if Gianni hadn't wanted to know a little more.

'You, Signor . . . '

'Pietro, my name is Pietro, Pietrone.'

'You did very well, Signor Pietro,' but just then he was seized by a doubt, mistrusted the man, and so, instead of going on, added: 'they say so many foolish things, so much gossip; but I don't think Signor Gattegna has anything to worry about, though thanks all the same for the warning.'

'But those are terrible people.'

Ugo was already thinking of something else. Happy that Gianni had relieved him of the problem, he had not grasped the meaning of the last words, but drew a deep breath when he heard Gianni say:

'I'll see Pietro out, you don't mind?'

'On the contrary, you'll do me a favour. Goodbye, Pietro, thank you for your trouble.'

Pietro made a sort of half bow; Ugo shook his hand, then heard them both going out, and leaned his head on the back of the armchair.

Gianni saw the man to the gate, walking slowly and talking till they were near the main road where they said goodbye.

On the road Faldella was waiting for Pietrone.

'What did he say?'

'He speaks very little, but there's a friend of his, the one that came out with me; he seems to have understood quite well; he asked me many things and told me; to come back to see him when I had news from the city. I think he's experienced in these matters.'

'You'd better be careful, you never can tell.'

'I've got an instinct for these things.'

'But what do you want from them now?'

'If they open up they can be useful to us; Gattegna doesn't mean anyone any harm, and he's not dangerous. If they open up I can tell people in town that we have important people with us in this area, understand?'

'Of course, I understand.'

'Besides, my friend said we've got to be on the look-out nowadays because we've no time to lose.'

'There's no time to lose, of course.'

Coming back in, Gianni sat down in front of Ugo, then asked him:

'Are you sure it's all right? That man seemed to mean what he said, and nowadays one can't really afford to laugh these things off.'

'He certainly meant what he said,' Ugo replied.

'It'll be better not to be too trusting, which is another good reason.'

'For what?'

'For being careful.'

'Careful, why?'

'Well, just leave it to me.'

'Yes, yes, you do whatever you think best.'

III

During the next weeks Gianni met Pietrone several times; Ugo, who had seen them together, never asked anything. Throughout the countryside reigned a silent dismay; the road was again crowded with soldiers, and convoys passed almost uninterruptedly. At night the almost incessant rumble of their engines rose to the hilltop like a great trembling; at times Ugo would go to the window and watch their movement for a long time, and Gianni who would be near him would say:

'You see?'

'Soon it won't be wise to stay here any longer,' Gianni would answer him.

For the last few days the paper had not arrived because the mail had ceased to function. The war was approaching, and the peasants were uneasy and mistrustful; the women watched everything with suspicion, the men had prepared sacks full of miscellaneous objects and some had secretly buried their money and gold. Gianni often met Pietrone who brought him news he judged to be from a fairly reliable source.

In that uncertain and uneasy atmosphere only two creatures remained estranged and impassive: Cesira and Ugo; the two of them

continued to lead their usual existence, each one occasionally observing the subterranean agitation; they would stop to watch the incessant coming and going of cars on the main road, then seemed to forget everything the minute they were back in the room. In fact Ugo forgot everything he saw during those days the minute he took his eyes from it; he managed without any effort to forget the spectacle of war which was continuously growing; in her heart Cesira would try to do likewise, but her uneasiness would not have been stilled if she hadn't had the possibility of feeling the young Gattegna near her.

On the other hand, Gianni had become more prudent; he would stay away from the road which was teeming with soldiers, and had already warned Ugo that he should take more precautions so as not to be caught unprepared in case of necessity.

'But why?' Ugo would answer.

'I'm sure that at some point I will have to leave this house and you won't be able to stay here either, not even Cesira; the mountains could be a safe place for the time being, and I know that up there we'll be among safe people.'

'But why leave here?'

'Haven't you eyes? Can't you see what's happening? Don't you realise that very soon we may find ourselves in the middle of the war?'

Ugo would not answer; only once while Gianni was trying to impress upon him that the soldiers were retreating, taking livestock and men with them, he asked:

'Do you think they will take our things too?'

'Of course they will, try to understand, try to listen to what's being said and trust me a little.'

'Then I'll hide them,' said Ugo.

After that day Ugo ordered Cesira to put all the movable objects in his room into various trunks—the gold, the trinkets; then he called for Baccelli and told him to hide the trunks on the other side of the hill; Baccelli, who for days had been doing nothing else, who was busy having the livestock and the most expensive farm equipment removed, and who had organised a sort of temporary village in one of the Gattegnas' woods in the mountains, barely answered his master, had the stuff loaded on the first cart that was leaving for the mountains, and went off preoccupied with the direction of operations like a general preparing for battle.

In the city there was no less confusion; by now soldiers were everywhere, many command posts had been sent there, and whoever could leave his house and seek refuge in the country was doing so as fast as possible. Ugo's relatives were also caught up in the collective panic, and in one day decided to go to the Big House taking with them their most essential and precious belongings. They arrived on top of a hired cart which managed to reach the Big House by making a wide detour through the hills, across country lanes and fields, as one could no longer travel on the main roads. Military convoys were now moving from south to north.

All day long Ugo would stay in his room (which was now bare of all his things), in a black mood; he felt as if he were in a strange place, and would continually walk up and down repeating to himself: 'What nonsense!' He would only calm down by leaning on the window-sill and watching the long line of military vehicles.

When he heard his relatives had arrived, he went downstairs; they all sat down in the living-room and Rosano said:

'Here we are pretty well out of the way; it's a thoroughfare, let's hope we won't be bothered, but there's really nowhere safe any more.'

'What do you think of it, Ugo?' Adele asked.

'Nothing'.

'But doesn't it all worry you?'

'Yes, yes.'

'You can hardly believe the stories you hear in town; they say the soldiers drag all the men off with them, they kill, take the livestock, steal, they shoot; then they say that they . . . '

'That's enough, father,' said Adele; then asked: 'and is your friend still here?'

'Yes, he's up on the hills, but later he'll be here.'

Then Ugo and Adele went out for a while, climbed as far as the edge of the woods from which they could see the main road, crawling with cars, the sound of their engines making the air throb. Otherwise

the plain seemed deserted; there wasn't a thread of smoke, not a sign of life.

'I'm glad you came,' said Ugo; but in his heart he wasn't sure that he was.

'Are you really and truly glad?' said the girl with enthusiasm; 'everyone's leaving the city.'

'Let's get away from here,' said Ugo.

'Wherever you like.'

They went down the slope towards a group of peasant houses behind which the land fell away in large terraces, cultivated and scattered with olive trees; here and there were lettuce patches, rows of vines, everything squared off in the regular series of steps with loving and meticulous care. The two young people walked on, up and down, losing themselves in tiny paths cut into the high hills; and enclosed by hedges and brambles; every now and then a large tree would rise towards the sky with its black shadow balancing the countryside which sloped towards the plain.

'You feel you're losing your balance up here on this ground that slopes to one side,' said Adele. Ugo was silent, though struck by the sentence; it seemed a particularly curious observation and he tried to discover why he thought so; but he only felt the sensation that in those words of Adele's there was something to do with him personally; as if one of his shoulders were lower than the other, as if one of his arms weighed more than the other; he tried to think of something else on the subject, but apart from these sensations he could find nothing that interested him: he then remembered the girl who was next to him, and looking at her, said:

'What a strange remark of yours!'

'Which one?' asked Adele, who was no longer thinking of her last words.

'The slope of the ground.'

'It's just an idea. I live in the city and everything there is always on one level, there aren't any slopes.' Ugo stopped in the middle of the path, slowly turned his shoulders, stood in front of the girl as if he wanted to block her way and looked into her eyes. Adele tried to withstand that hard, yet caressing, velvety grey glance looking back into those eyes with their eyebrows straight as a ruler, then lowered her head, shaking her hair which fell on to her shoulders almost white against the light; she raised her head again, deliberately sought out her cousin's eyes and started to smile with an expression that meant to be sure of herself but which betrayed a touch of nervousness; in fact, the man with the big shoulders who seemed to have rooted himself in the path like a tree, like an insurmountable obstacle, was giving her a sense of subjection, almost of fear. She tried to accomplish her slow and skilful smile: but Ugo's face reflected, as it never had before, his immobility so difficult to understand; and his mouth, so strongly carved above the large powerful chin, might have given the impression of something entirely devoid of life, cut out of stone. Adele tried to finish her smile naturally, then asked:

'Do you want to stop here?' and as Ugo would not answer, all of a sudden she turned and ran off towards home; after barely ten steps she stopped, made a conciliatory gesture with her arm, stood for a moment watching Ugo still motionless in the middle of the road, then made up her mind and fled, her hair blowing in the wind.

Ugo stood and watched her till she had disappeared; then he too, with his hard, monotonous step, started off towards the Big House.

Before reaching the villa, Adele ran into Gianni.

'Where are you running?'

'Home,' she said, slowing down to a walk beside him.

'Have you been for a walk? I'd heard you'd arrived.'

'Yes, I went out with Ugo, but he stayed back there.'

'Did you leave him alone?'

The girl laughed happily, then said:

'I felt like running away so I left him there in the middle of the path.'

'Ah! you let him down!'

'No, but with Ugo one never knows what to do.'

'It's difficult, one's never quite sure.'

'And where have you come from?'

'I made a little tour round here; the whole country's in a state of terror; a sort of subterranean collective fear; everyone's expecting something, and they're not far wrong; listen!' He was silent a moment and the echo of the rumble of thousands of motors on the road reached them like a

cascading waterfall, a monotonous mechanical wail.

'One doesn't know where to go to be safe, but I feel easier here than in the city.'

'Yes, this is a thoroughfare; it won't last long here, but there'll be a moment when it will be wise not to fool ourselves, and get out.'

'And how can we do it?'

'All we need do is go off towards the mountains. Don't worry, there are more ways out than you imagine, and many preparations have already been made. The hardest thing, I think, will be to make your cousin understand all this, as he won't listen to reason; I'm sure he understands things as well as we do; but he won't hear of it; perhaps he's resentful, something like contempt, but then who knows what goes on in that head of his?'

'If only one could tell!'

'There's no point trying to guess with Ugo, yet I'm sure there must be a way of understanding him; there ought to be the right kind of key for him somewhere.'

'You couldn't have said it better! We must find the right kind of key.'

'Yes, but the important thing for the moment is to convince him to worry a little more about what's going to happen.'

In fact, that evening Gianni tried with much skill to make a long speech to Ugo; he told him with great precision, assuring him of its exactness, of the horrors and dangers that would develop the moment the centre of warfare passed where they were; and it would pass there, as the new holding point at the front was down, near the Apuan Alps. Rosano tried to throw doubt on everything Gianni said that was most worrying, but finally concluded that he had prepared himself as best he could, that he and his wife and daughter had a knapsack ready with which to make off at the slightest alarm. Seeing that only Ugo was not taking part in the discussion, Gianni then said:

'You, too, will have to make up your mind, Ugo.'

'Make up my mind?'

'Certainly, there won't be much choice; you won't want to stay here, alone in the middle of a war?'

'But no one will hurt me, I don't even notice other people or what goes on around me, and being alone most certainly will not bother me.'

'But what kind of reasoning is that?' said Adele's mother, who usually listened in silence.

'I don't think reasoning helps very much; however, in such circumstances it's absolutely useless,' said Ugo.

'If you won't make up your mind, at the last minute we'll drag you after us by force', said Adele.

'Never mind, we'll see.' And with that Ugo had nothing more to add.

The next day, when Cesira came into his room, Ugo said to her:

'You'd best prepare yourself to leave the house if there is any danger, Cesira.'

'Everyone's talking of going away; most of the men who are still around are going to the mountains today. What a business!'

'Then prepare yourself, too.'

'Will you be coming?'

'No, no, Cesira.'

'Then I'll stay here, Master Ugo.' And she went back down to the kitchen.

IV

The next day Ugo went out with his cousin, and this time too the girl came home alone, preceding him by almost an hour. When Ugo came in, it was time to sit down to supper, but he did not take his place, remaining standing.

'Aren't you sitting down, Ugo?' Adele asked.

'No.'

'Why not?' asked Adele's mother.

'Because I don't want anything to eat.'

'Aren't you feeling well?' Gianni asked worriedly.

'On the contrary, but excuse me, I'm going upstairs.' And he went up to his room.

When Cesira came in with the soup, she immediately asked after the master, putting a plate at his place.

'He doesn't want anything tonight.'

Cesira, without even noticing it, stopped waiting on the guests, stood thinking for a while, then said as if to herself:

'It isn't possible.'

'Why not?'

'Please excuse me a moment.' And without waiting for an answer, she was heard climbing the stairs with surprising speed.

Ugo was standing at the window. From the plain came the noise of cars, even more cumbersome than usual; the air was black and tepid, the sky full of stars.

'Master Ugo,' said the woman.

'What is it, Cesira?'

'They told me you didn't want anything to eat.'

'It's true.'

'But that's never happened before.'

'Don't worry Cesira; besides, I have a few biscuits here.'

'Aren't you well?'

'Very well.' And for Ugo the words marked the end of the brief conversation; Cesira knew it well, and did not need to experiment to know that Ugo wouldn't have answered her further. Cesira went back down the stairs in a bad mood and gruffly served the others. No one wanted to talk, and as soon as they got up from the table, each one went to his room.

During the night, slowly and indistinctly, mixed with the rumble of the engines which gave no peace, a sort of autumnal voice, which seemed to come from underground, out of space, began to be heard. Only Ugo was immediately able to notice that new note in the midst of the clatter that filled the countryside, that new voice which was added to the already familiar rumble of trucks; only he could hear it, because he was awake. He had stayed at the window to listen to the ever more frantic rumble, and to look out into space. It seemed as if the fields were shaking, as if a tireless wave were rolling across the plain, and he had stayed there without thinking of anything; two or three times he had been attracted and become less vague at the sound of a tawny owl drifting down from the woods, and had cut himself off from the rumbling as if to defend the last shred of silence of the hills and fields which had always ruled the nights from up there. For a few minutes there had also been a nightingale; Ugo had listened to it too, but then had smiled and said to himself: 'You fool!' He listened with aching heart, and then repeated angrily: 'You fool!' But the incessant thundering which had appeared on the plain seemed to make rapid flights through the air, advancing along the horizon, broadening in the distance.

The dawn came, and the sun appeared slowly, re-emerging inexorably to continue eternally on its route, or at least it seemed inexorable to Ugo who, still standing at the window, was waiting for it with enmity in his heart. When the dawn came, Ugo felt frighteningly empty, and started to search the very core of his entrails. He was searching for that powerful and domineering activity which he did not realise was so much a part of his hermit's soul and so much a necessity to his health; that twisting of things within him was perhaps the struggle of his spirit perennially nailed to his muscles, a prisoner of his nerves which were constantly taut, despite appearances.

There was no sign of life from the peasant houses, although the sun was already skimming the treetops; not a door was open, not a cart or a beast in the fields, not a thread of smoke at that time when every house was wont to send up a black column into the sky. By the first light of the sun the road seemed crammed; the shiny tape of asphalt was completely hidden by a flow of indistinct things which moved monotonously up it, like a row of ants, like dense germinating liquid. And the other voice on the horizon would not cease; in fact it was growing stronger as if to dominate the deafening sound of the motors. Only then did Ugo listen to it and take it into consideration, only at that moment did he understand, stopping his thoughts for a moment on that thunder which was invading all space, and said to himself: 'It's the guns.'

Almost at the same instant the door of his room opened; Gianni came in in pyjamas and said excitedly:

'Did you hear?'

'Yes. Good morning.'

'It's the guns!'

'Yes, it's the guns!' Adele's father could be heard shouting from below.

'It's the guns!'

As Gianni went over to the window by his friend, something moved among the rows of vines.

'Someone's coming!'

They were silent and eventually saw Pietrone and Faldella come out into the open, looking around cautiously before exposing themselves. They spoke together pointing at the house, but before they

could make up their minds, Gianni called to them. They approached, making signs not to shout, and when they were under the window, said:

'Come down quickly; you must hurry.'

It was time to leave the house. It would have been wiser to have left it at night; all around them the peasants had gone over the hills during the night or the previous evening; patrols had been searching the plains, had set fire to a few houses, killed an unknown number of people; now they had been seen at the foot of the hills, and they might not hesitate to come up as far as the first houses on the slopes. There was nothing to do but take the path towards the woods, slipping out of the back of the house through the garden. 'Three miles from here we will find others who are waiting for us, but we must hurry'—with these words the two men had finished their excited recital.

Coming back, Gianni did not have to explain, as Adele and her parents were already in the living-room with their knapsacks ready. Gianni, too, was ready in a moment, but there was no sign of Ugo.

'Leave by the back of the house, wait for me near the coal shed, in a while I'll be there with Ugo and Cesira.'

'If you don't come too, I'll come back; understand, Ugo?' Adele had yelled up as she went out with her parents. Then Ugo appeared on the landing of the staircase and greeted the girl with a vague gesture of his hand which could have even been meant as a sign of assurance.

'You go along, go along,' Gianni kept repeating as he joined Ugo.

'Ugo, I can't make a long speech; there's no time for discussion; no one must stay here; it would be madness; come away with us.'

'No, Gianni. What could happen here? You must go, because you have reasons for being out of the way; for you, you know, it's different.'

'But it isn't a question of that.'

'Go along.'

'But don't be absurd!'

'Go along.'

'No,' said Gianni angrily.

'Run along. They're waiting for you.'

On the hillock below, on the threshing floor of the nearest peasant house, something was moving; the two friends watched carefully; there were soldiers, then two more came out from behind the wall carrying their guns in their hands and looking about circumspectly.

'Armed soldiers,' said Ugo.

'Yes,' said Gianni, paling. 'Ugo, come with me, I beg you.'

Just then Cesira appeared in the doorway. Gianni turned to her: 'We must run, in a few minutes they'll be here!'

But Cesira was not listening, she was looking at the untouched bed; all of a sudden, raising her arms she cried:

'My God, Master Ugo, but you haven't been to sleep!' and she stood questioningly, frowning, in the middle of the room; meanwhile Ugo was trying to push Gianni towards the stairs:

'Go on. I tell you, go on.' Gianni held back; outside a few shots were heard in the distance, then Gianni began to move backwards down the stairs pleading with Ugo:

'Please, please.'

'Look after Adele!' Ugo shouted after Gianni as he went out of the garden door and ran towards the woods without really knowing what he was doing.

Left alone, Ugo stepped back from the window, leaving it half closed, and sat down at his desk; then, noticing Cesira, said to her:

'Sit down Cesira and stay with me awhile.' Then suddenly he turned and looked at her:

'But you must run. What are you doing here? You must go with the others, run!'

'What are you thinking of?' said Cesira in a tone of reproof.

V

On the plain, at three different spots, there was something burning; the black smoke of the fires rose straight towards the sky in the still air; there wasn't a breath of wind.

Cesira had closed all the windows in the house; only the one in Ugo's bedroom was left open a crack, and though from outside it looked barred like all the others, Ugo could look out every now and then at the main road and the plain below. Occasionally groups of soldiers could be seen here and there on the hill, coming right up to the first rows of vines to rest and eat the sour grapes; some had gone close to the

woods but had stopped at a safe distance, watching the denser parts and making wide detours. By now the infernal noise of the road merely served to accentuate the stillness all around; the countryside was deserted.

Ugo felt curiously well, almost happy; rarely had he experienced such complete relaxation. At the thought of being so isolated from everything and everyone, he felt filled with a profound sense of peacefulness; Cesira would spend an hour or so in his room sitting on a chair by the door, as still as an inanimate object, also quite happy. They felt they had now reached a state they had longed for for years and nothing of what took place outside those four walls bothered them in the least, though they could now quite clearly understand it.

At first, when he looked at the woman who had stayed with him, she too quite undisturbed, he had thought: 'What an egoist!' Then he had said to her:

'I was wrong in not forcing you to go, and now it's impossible.'

'But no; what are you thinking of, Master Ugo?'

'But it's dangerous.'

'Do you think so?' the woman had said.

'Cesira, perhaps you don't realise, I should have made you understand that . . .'

'Don't worry; I understand quite well.'

And silence had once more fallen between them in the room filled with the vibrations which came from the bottom of the hill, the gunfire now reaching them roundly and regularly, always nearer.

When Cesira had seen him sit down at his desk and scribble on his bits of paper, she had thought with satisfaction: 'Master Ugo is happy. But how could he manage without me? Who would have cooked for him?' At this thought she was reminded of something and went downstairs to the kitchen to prepare some lunch.

'Be careful,' Ugo had warned her. 'From outside, the house must look empty.'

'Certainly'.

The whole day passed that way. Ugo stayed quietly in his room, getting up every now and then from his chair to look through the crack in the blinds; now, though the road was still crawling with vehicles, as if their diabolical passing would never end, a number of soldiers on foot could also be seen scouring the countryside, especially in the plains, in silent circumspect patrols, rarely coming up on to the hills.

Cesira installed herself in Gianni's room on the first floor, near Ugo's room, in order to be ready for any eventuality, but perhaps even more so as not to feel completely alone as she did downstairs in the barred house, surrounded by the insidious rumbling which had submerged the deserted countryside. Ugo had never needed so little attention from the woman; he had not felt so peaceful for a long time, and was even looking forward to the days which were still to be passed in that situation with an intense joy which seemed to prickle under his skin; there was also an indefinable sadness in all of this, and also a great uncertainty as to the reality of the wealth of joy that possessed him; but his thoughts about even the immediate future were nothing but fleeting flashes, whereas he would live every instant that passed and sink back into it, as if it were all eternity.

Evening came slowly that day; from time to time guttural voices were added to the noise of the road, sometimes clearly enough to distinguish shreds of conversation when groups of soldiers would stray from the road towards the first heights of the hill. There was also the sound of rifles being fired, and an occasional violent explosion; then, before the night had definitely smothered all those men with their noise in a blanket of darkness, the guns were heard near by. It was no longer a steady thunder, but the bursts were separate from each other, punctuated by pauses, after which they would return with a splitting crash or a deep heavy rumbling.

Ugo finished his supper, and, seeing the time, said to the woman:

'It's still early, stay with me awhile.'

'Thank you, Master Ugo.'

'Why thank me?'

And they both sat in the dark; he in his armchair by the desk, she on a chair by the door, as still as could be. In that silence the window-panes would shake from time to time, and the night air made a door on the ground floor squeak on its hinges.

'I'll go down and shut it.'

'Leave it, it will keep us company.'

Cesira was not of the same opinion, but tried to convince herself that just then, the low squeaking was a friendly voice, and quite soon she succeeded.

'If it bothers you,' said Ugo.

'No, I'll close it before I go to bed.'

In the darkness which came very suddenly, they noticed each other's presence. Cesira had started to recite her prayers in her mind, for her rosary was still on the chair in the kitchen. Ugo was silent; steps were heard outside, then voices; there must have been soldiers right by the vineyard, on the edge of the clearing in front of the kitchen; for a while they could clearly hear the brief foreign words, then nothing. If they could have seen each other, they would have seen that they were sitting quite still, holding their breath, but without the least worry showing on their faces.

'They're all round the house,' said Cesira.

VI

Ugo

If you're frightened, stay here.

Cesira

I'm not frightened.

Ugo

That's right. What have we to be frightened of? Since we won't leave anything, we can't be afraid of losing anything. And yet these last few days I've wondered if I were entirely lacking in something. But doubts don't help; one shouldn't have doubts.

Cesira

I never have doubts.

Ugo

About what?

Cesira

About another life.

Ugo

Another life? Let's hope not, this one's quite enough.

Cesira

I don't think one should talk that way.

Ugo

Who told you so?

Cesira

Well, no one.

Ugo

One has to have human affection; someone must want us, then perhaps . . . But I'm all here, complete and self-contained. Here for me everything starts and ends every instant, in the very same moment:

I am nothing but myself, aren't I, Cesira?

Cesira

If you say so.

Ugo

That's right, I have to say it; no one else can say it, or not say it. Everyone else has so much to think about.

Cesira

It's better not to think of anything.

Ugo

That's right, as if we were nothing, and yet when all is said and done, I am something. I know and remember other people's faces, but actually there's only me, no one but me.

Cesira

Aren't you feeling well, Master Ugo?

Ugo

I wish I weren't, if only for once; but this health of mine twists and turns inside me like a caged beast protesting and roaring, without anyone to hear it; I, however, quite often hear it. It's disgusting! But there's nothing I can do. How I wish I could! I can know all about any of my gestures, curl up inside myself, but it's not enough; there must be something I don't quite understand, some far away, vast guilt mirrored in me who am blameless, who know nothing. But at last tonight I feel tired, my head feels heavy.

Cesira

You're tired! Of course you didn't sleep last night; your bed's still untouched.

Ugo

I'm tired because one cannot hold one's self up, damn it up and compress it for eternity; the time comes when something slips past, wants to escape from constrictions, and tie up with, search out, other people, forget one's own being. Perhaps I should have somehow been able to understand what one gets out of one's own life if one has the courage to enter into others.'

Cesira

You've had an education, and you know what you're talking about.

Ugo

No, I don't. Educated in what? I know nothing but what has always been in here, always been imprisoned, for ever held in with violence, and with no way out.

Cesira

Master Ugo, if you'll listen to me, you'll go to bed; you must be very tired, and I'm afraid you're not feeling well.

Ugo

To be really exhausted to the point of needing someone else to handle one's body and one's soul, that might be the way out.

Cesira

For whatever you need, I'm always here, you know that, master Ugo.

Ugo

Poor Cesira, always there, always ready to help the Gattegnas, this breed which has spawned me into the world as a rare plant which can vegetate on its natural strength, when all the time there is this spirit that works hard and struggles within it. I should not have been spawned, but cultivated, and learnt the job of making an existence for myself.

Cesira

It must be very late.

Ugo

It will always be later, Cesira. But what nonsense, what a way of speaking! It must be this solitude having an effect on us, Cesira. Let's go to bed.

Cesira

Do you need anything?

Ugo

No, nothing . . . But what a way to talk, what nonsense! I don't need anything Cesira, good night.

Cesira

Well, good night then.

Cesira went to her room in the dark, feeling the wall to find the door. She undressed almost weeping, oppressed by a pain she could not account for; a sort of boundless sadness oppressed and engulfed her. She ended up by undressing hurriedly and throwing herself face down on the bed to drown a fit of sobbing which was shaking her thin body. Silent tears overcame her, enclosing her in the most utter despair, which stayed with her throughout the night. She did not know the reason for her tears; she had never dreamt that one day the master would speak to her at length; and, as she cried, she repeated mechanically: 'My God, my God, forgive me!'

Meanwhile Ugo, after a few minutes, was peacefully sleeping, the room filled with the even breathing of a strong, healthy man.

VII

In the morning Ugo woke up at the usual time and even before hearing the monotonous rumble which for so many days had come up from the road, he realised that the cannon had noticeably approached.

Cesira was already up.

'Prepare me a blue suit and a white shirt.'

'Do you wish to go out?'

Ugo smiled:

'Would it be possible, do you think?'

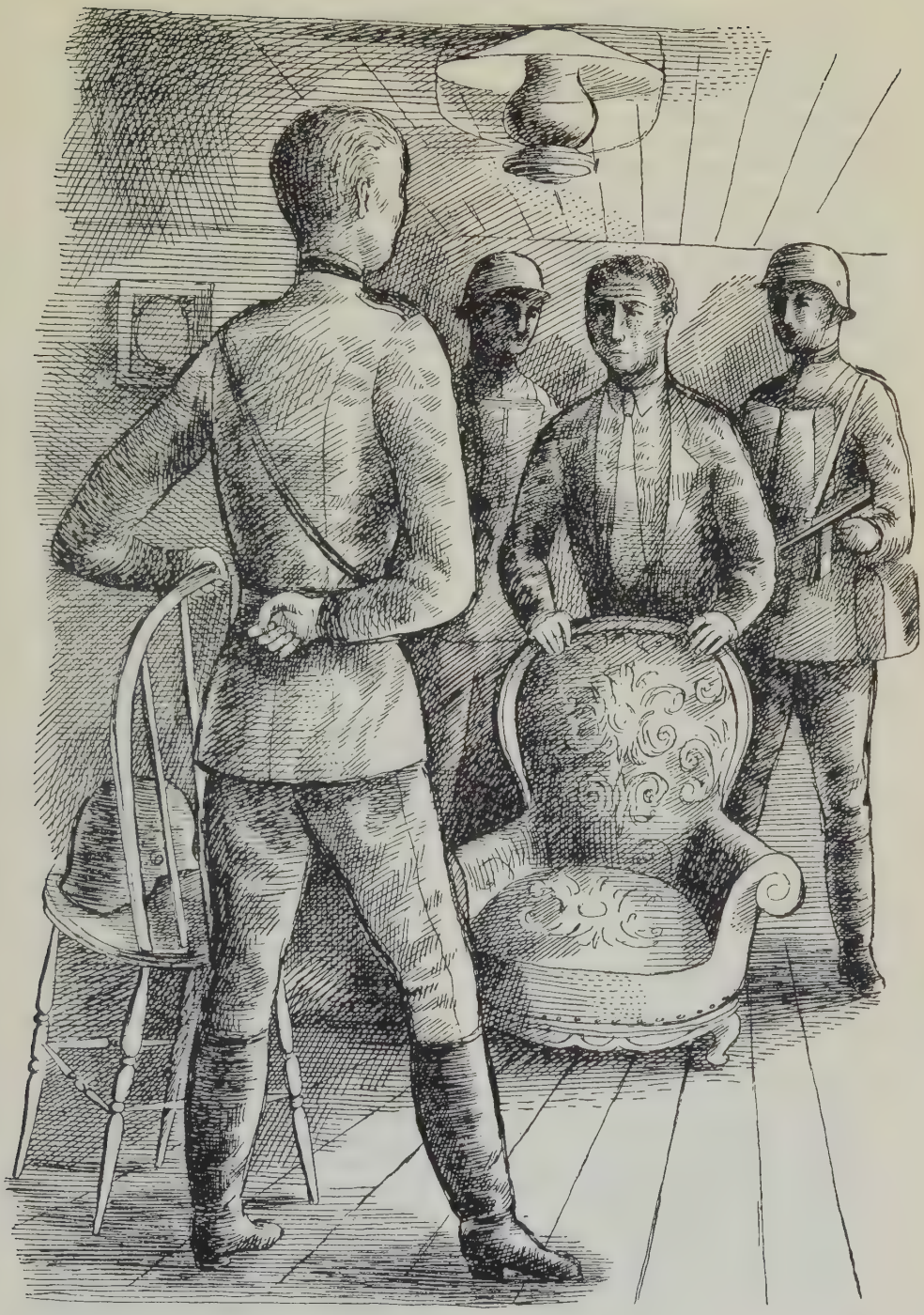
'How stupid of me!' said the woman.

'It really wouldn't be possible,' said Ugo going over to the window. Tanks were still passing, but only a fraction of the ones that had passed in the last few days; the asphalt again looked up at the sky, and the men who walked passed in single file, their guns on their shoulders, had greatly increased in number, sagging with fatigue, oppressed by the weight of complicated weapons. Now and then a group would stop for a while on the grass.

Ugo took an hour and a half dressing carefully, then went down to the living-room, but even with the curtains drawn it still felt too open; so he went to sit in a special little study right next to it in which it was perhaps a year since he had set foot; it was a sort of little library with a desk between two beautiful armchairs. Even with the doors shut, the window-panes rattled occasionally; but when he would stop to listen, he could hear the desert all around him growing.

Ugo was feeling well that morning; he had slept through the night, and now, as they did during the best days of his solitude, the old books which covered the walls of the little room attracted him violently, passionately. He began to look them over. It was not an easy job for him to read the series of labels, for each one carried with it, in the speed of time, all kinds of sensations which Ugo was capable of enjoying and understanding in all their subtleties, as if instead of an instant he had devoted an hour to each. But in front of the title of a three-volume work he stopped; he knew it quite well, but when it passed under his eyes, he thought: 'This one today.' He put the books near his chair and began to read:

The House Has Started Moving



5

'Mamma, como dolore de morte,
me pare forte lo planto che fai!
Eo vedo, Mamma, che si in core
afflitta . . . '

The three lines in the book removed him from all other sensation, and the first part of the day passed quickly; in the afternoon Ugo had prepared to pass the time the same way, but that day Cesira was extremely sensitive to what was going on outside; she seemed to be drawn taut, listening to every tiny sound which came from outdoors; in fact, at a certain moment, she went into the little room, approached the closed window and said: 'Listen'.

Ugo unwillingly looked up from his reading, closed the book with his finger as a book-mark and started to listen. Steps could be heard; a group of men were walking near the house; it wasn't the first time this had happened, but now the steps resounded within a few feet of the house, and, although someone was speaking in a low voice, the foreign words could easily be heard.

'Don't worry,' said Ugo. 'They're nearly all gone, those must be the last.' And he went back to reading.

The men passed right under the window, their steps dying out round the corner of the house where they stopped in front of the main door. Ugo went on reading, but was in fact listening despite himself, while Cesira leaned against the wall, her face quite white.

Not two minutes passed before the whole house was shaken by an explosion which made the walls and the furniture rattle; Cesira put her hand to her mouth. Another explosion just like the first caused a creaking; it was the front door which was beginning to give.

'They're breaking down the door,' said Cesira.

'Then we'd better open it.'

'No!'

'Oh, yes. Otherwise in a while they'll come in anyhow. Come with me.'

They stopped in front of the door which was already showing some light under the impact of new blows.

'Ask who it is,' said Ugo.

'Who is it?' asked Cesira, suddenly calm.

The blows stopped; there was a moment's silence, then an uncertain voice said:

'Is somebody there?'

Another voice ordered:

'Open up.'

Ugo approached and opened the door. He had to move out of the way as five dirty soldiers rushed in, their faces dark with many days' beard, their weapons pointed towards the entrance as they stood in a row. A moment later an officer came in; he was tall and thin with two deep lines on his forehead. He looked around, then said to Ugo:

'Are you Italian?'

'Of course.'

Then he made a sign to the men and to Ugo, indicating to them to move back in the house. They all went into the living-room; Ugo led the way, followed by Cesira, who seemed to have recovered her calmness, and who would not take her eyes off her master.

'You may go on back to the kitchen,' Ugo said to Cesira. The woman started to obey him, but the other man interjected:

'No,' then asked: 'is there anyone else in the house?'

'No'.

The officer sat down after ordering some of the soldiers to search all the rooms, and Ugo, too, sat down. The two remaining soldiers stood in front of him with their guns pointed, watching the officer to see if they should allow him to sit.

'How did you happen to stay here? No one else left round here; all the other houses have been abandoned?'

Ugo did not answer at once; he was already suffering from a great desire not to say anything.

'I'm in my own house.'

'There's no one anywhere around, and you stay here hiding; why?'

'I'm not hiding; I'm in my own house, and I haven't the slightest idea what other people are doing.'

'But in a short while the others will be here, for the time being at least.'

Ugo shrugged, and looked the officer in the eye without answering. The officer seemed to be taking on a more familiar expression and was watching him as if he were paying a call and making polite conversation.

'No one,' said a soldier, coming down from upstairs. Two more came back from

the kitchen and the cellar holding a number of dusty bottles. The officer pretended not to notice.

'We must go, sir,' he said turning to Ugo.

'Whenever you choose,' Ugo answered.

'But you will have to come with us; you don't seem to have understood,' said the officer with an almost pleasant smile.

'No, I haven't understood.'

The officer's smile vanished immediately

'It won't take you long.'

Ugo's lips were seen to narrow slowly, start a light pressure on each other, until the outline, usually large and clear-cut, appeared like a purple slit on his face. Cesira who had hardly noticed anything, so busy was she observing her master's face, shuddered at the sight, and began to look at him pleadingly, opened her mouth to say something, but said not a word; and Ugo did not see her because he was not thinking of her.

'Come on.'

Ugo got up, went behind the armchair, leaned his arms on its back and calmly began to watch the man who was giving him such imperious commands. Cesira kept her eyes riveted on him, but Ugo, instead of looking that way, went on watching the officer with a calmness only broken by his spasmodic tightening of lips.

'I wouldn't try to resist,' said the officer cordially. Ugo continued to watch him. For a while they stood facing each other, Ugo with his hands on the back of the armchair, the soldier unsure of himself. At last the officer made an impatient gesture, but Ugo stayed where he was with his candid grey eyes on that face whose irreparably sealed mouth betrayed its intention.

'Then take him. We cannot waste time; we are in a hurry,' said the officer to his soldiers in the language Ugo knew well enough to understand.

Two men came nearer to take his arms, but with a movement which had every appearance of being quite natural, Ugo straightened himself, and they were both thrown more than a yard. Then the two soldiers, with the help of a third, started to approach again, but Ugo, with the same ease as he could handle a small object, lifted the heavy armchair into the air, without the least strain, ready to haul it at the nearest one.

There was nothing but a small sharp click, short and absurd, like the crackling of a piece of furniture when the weather changes. Ugo fell, and the armchair rolled away from him, upsetting a small table. Outside, two or three simultaneous explosions, together with many others further away, shook the air. The officer gave a quick order and the soldiers started for the door with the bottles of vintage wines in their hands, while the last one, just before going out, detached a painting from the wall and went off with it under his arm.

From the open door one could see the countryside barely touched by the rose light of the sun which was already setting close to the horizon; far away a column of smoke bisected the view which was framed by the doorway. One could now hear the bursts of gunfire, near and far, enclosed in short pauses of heightened silence.

VIII

Instead of losing her head, Cesira felt herself stiffen into a cold, normal calmness; the moment the soldiers moved off without even bothering about her, she rushed to Ugo to find out the seriousness of what had happened. At the same time Ugo had managed with difficulty to turn over and stretch out on the floor. He remained in that position with his eyes towards the ceiling, without saying a word: seeing him move, even before taking care of him, Cesira ran to close the door, but could only push it to, as the sides no longer fitted; then she knelt by Ugo.

'Can you say something?'

'What do you want me to say?'

'You can't stay here.'

'I don't think I can move, at the moment.'

Then the woman collected all the cushions in the room, and with skilful movements, trying to move her master as little as possible, as he himself could do nothing to help her, improvised a sort of couch underneath him which was not too uncomfortable. Finally she uncovered the young man's stomach, where his jacket was pierced, and bared a small dark hole on the skin, a single drop of blood.

'It doesn't look serious.'

'What curious people they are,' said Ugo, but in making a slight movement, he paled rapidly and tightened his lips. The woman was worried by only one thought: not to lose her calm; and this preoccupation so absorbed her that she couldn't think. It had grown dark and she ran to light a kerosene lamp, putting it on a nearby chair and going back to look at the wound. Ugo kept his eyes closed; his breathing was even, and his forehead cut by a deep line which was new to his face, always firm and unruffled.

'How do you feel?'

The woman gave him some water to drink, then tried to bind the wound, which was still not bleeding, with a little gauze. Now she, too, was pale; her hands had begun to tremble, and at a certain point she fell forward with her head on the edge of a pillow; lying there, fainted. Outside it was quiet; instead of the noise and explosions of a few hours before, there was absolute stillness all around the house, throughout the countryside and the plains.

When Cesira came to, she stayed for a long time in that uncomfortable position, unable to move. She searched her memory, saw the yellow light of the lamp throw longer shadows on the floor, and, for an instant, the image took her back to a life forgotten some forty years: she seemed to see the house she was born in, the familiar light of the evenings of her childhood; but she had not yet properly formulated the impression when she felt herself being dragged back to something more impelling; it was then that she remembered, not without difficulty, all that had happened, and came back to reality violently, with an image which overlapped the confusion of her thoughts. She moved, and one of Ugo's hands which was resting on her hair fell to the cushion; she lifted her head and looked into his face, met his velvety grey eyes staring right back at her, and both of them smiled.

She thought of running out to call someone, opened the window, but the darkness and silence, compact and infinite, reminded her of their situation; they were alone now, still alone, far from everyone, from friends and enemies. The cool air of the evening seeped in; Ugo turned his head and, speaking with difficulty, muttered:

'Leave it open, it's good.'

'How are you feeling? Tell me how you're feeling, tell me something.'

'Stay near me.'

'Don't worry,' and she sat down beside him on the edge of the upturned armchair, her eyes fixed on that face, so large and well known to her; but Ugo did not move, only occasionally rolling his eyes without moving his head; his face had become quite white, accentuating the look in his eyes, a little dampened, but profounder than usual.

Cesira had to make an effort because the more she realised she had it to herself, the more the silence all around her depressed her and the more she became impassively involved with her one preoccupation—that of doing her duty and not losing her head, of remaining vigilant and wakeful. The night passed slowly, suspended in a boundless stillness.

Then a slow, mother-of-pearl radiance moved across the floor beneath the drawn blinds; the lamplight turned red, slowly becoming a melancholy faded yellow spot in a pale ray of sunshine; but the silence was the same as at night.

Cesira would not have thought of moving if she had not been startled and frightened by Ugo's voice which asked her:

'Would you draw the curtains?'

She ran without thinking and pulled the cord with such violence that it broke off in her hand. Beyond the window-paning the trees of the garden appeared, and behind them the dark stretch of woods with the sky above it, already white, almost pressing against the glass with its colour of cotton wool.

'Thank you.'

'Tell me how you are feeling.'

'I don't know, I've never felt quite like this before. Stay with me.'

'There's nothing left outside; the plain and the countryside are deserted, a few houses are burning,' said Cesira after going out into the kitchen.

'Someone may come back today then.'

'Oh!' and with this exclamation the woman kneeled down by Ugo.

'Shall I look at your wound?'

'Leave it alone, there's nothing we can do about it; if I don't move; I don't feel it.'

Several things had collected on the floor: a few coffee-cups, bottles of liquor, a plate with some useless medicaments. Ugo was very thirsty and every now and then drank water and a sip of strong liquor.

Cesira had set the armchair straight and sat down in it, praying with her rosary in her hands.

'Don't pray now, please,' said Ugo; and Cesira stopped.

'Cesira.'

'Yes.'

'We should talk. I'd like to talk a little.'

'Yes, yes,' the woman answered quickly; but felt filled with a sort of dismay she could barely disguise. Ugo's eyes had become red at the edges and his lips had a trembling which would last for a moment, but which did not escape the woman: Ugo was now burning with a violent fever and would occasionally smile briefly.

IX

'It isn't always easy to talk, to know what one wants to say. All night, so many thoughts, so many thoughts and so many empty spaces Cesira, do you understand? It's good for us to speak a little, you will know how to listen; you too have never been happy.'

Cesira

Perhaps; I don't know, but it doesn't matter.

Ugo

It doesn't matter because it's pointless; one is born unhappy even.

Cesira

Don't tire yourself, Master Ugo.

Ugo

It isn't tiring. I can't move at all. I just feel I'm burning.

Cesira

It's the fever.

Ugo

Whatever it is, it doesn't matter. I would like to remember all the people I know, apart from you, Cesira; there's a great confusion in my head. Besides, perhaps I don't know anyone; I don't know anyone, do I, Cesira?

Cesira

Oh, yes . . .

Ugo

I must think of Rafaele, Luisa—you remember Luisa? Then there's Baccelli, we mustn't forget him. Don't forget anyone, Cesira, keep everyone in mind, understand? We must remember Adele.

Cesira

Oh, yes.

Ugo

And don't forget I have many things to do, that I have several things to say. Keep it all in mind.

Cesira

Don't worry, how are you feeling?

Ugo

Don't you think the house is moving?

Cesira

No, what are you saying! It's the fever.

Ugo

There's someone who wants to come in; let him in . . . No, no! Send them away . . . I must go out now, help me, I must go down there.

Cesira

But you can't move; keep still! What's come over you? Keep still for heaven's sake.

Ugo

They don't want to come to me, I know; they don't really love me. Cesira, nobody loves me, I tell you.

Cesira

For heaven's sake, you're feverish.

Ugo

God, how many people! But no one will listen to me; no one can hear what I'm saying; you too, Cesira, aren't listening, and you're quite right not to do so. I'm lone, I'm so alone.

Cesira

Yes, there is no one, no one at all; but I'm here, I'm here, Master Ugo.

Ugo

That's right, we're alone, you say so too. How very alone we are! Have a drink of water.

Cesira

Do you want a drink?

Ugo

The house has started moving.

After this last phrase Ugo closed his eyes and immediately dropped off. Cesira bent over him; for a long time she listened to his light irregular breathing, watched his closed eyes which were wet with a few tears, wet with a silent unconscious crying. Cesira could not remember if she had seen him cry as a small child, but searching her memory she was seized by a doubt which had not yet crossed her mind; it struck her that her master might die right there, but she repeated to herself: 'No, it is not possible.'

Then Cesira got up and mechanically set about doing odd jobs to which she was accustomed, looking into the living-room from time to time at the wounded man who continued to sleep, then sat down beside him again. Several hours passed, then, suddenly, steps were heard outside. Again there were people walking stealthily behind the house, while on the main road one started to hear the noise of a few vehicles. Cesira ran to the middle of the living-room and stared at the entrance in terror; through the hall she could see the door move; someone was slowly pushing, and it was opening. Three black faces, three pairs of white eyes set in ebony faces stared back at her; a smile flashed across the teeth of three mouths, and it was almost a greeting. Cesira screamed and brought her hands to her mouth. At her scream Ugo woke up. The Negroes came in, looked around as they crossed the room, barely glanced at the man on the floor, asked something which Cesira could not understand, then went out into the rows of vines.

'What's happening?' asked Ugo.

'Negroes'.

'What Negroes?'

'They came in and went out.'

'I know, don't worry.'

'How are you feeling?'

'Perhaps a little better.'

'There are people on the road again. I could go and see if there's someone who will help us . . . '

'Not yet, Cesira. I don't think it would be any use now; besides, I need you near me.'

'I'm here.'

'There's something on my mind. I want to think about it but I can't. Was I ever able to think? Never, was I, Cesira?'

'I don't know, Master Ugo.'

Ugo

No, no, one can't really know, one can't really know anything.

Cesira

I'm afraid you'll tire yourself.

Ugo

It's of no importance, that doesn't count. Do you remember, Cesira, how long time used to be for us? Now instead it runs, flies; it passes in a flash and we cannot see it. But our time has been long.

Cesira

What time?

Ugo

Oh, all of it, all of our time. When I was a child the days stretched out before my eyes like a dark passage which never ends. I would look at the other children.

Cesira

You were very quiet.

Ugo

It isn't easy to know what a child can do. I've never known what a child could do. There were too many things which gave me a stomach-ache just to think about. But now it's time to think of other people: do you remember?

Cesira

I thought we talked about them this morning.

Ugo

As if I really knew someone, as if someone remembered me. There isn't any pleasure thinking of things when they aren't true.

Cesira

What things?

Ugo

I meant real things. Surely, though, if I think hard, there must have been something real about my life: some kind of shadow must remain: it *was* a life, after all, even if it was a poor one, and that's something in itself. And you know, I could always make people like me if I really wanted to, only that was just vanity, I suppose. Only in the end I really began to think—I thought seriously—if I had only said—just one sentence would have been enough, and the answer would have been yes—but I never said anything: always the same trouble, I knew too well that was going to happen and for that very reason I didn't go on. But it doesn't matter: it doesn't matter at all.

Cesira

Master Ugo, I'm sure you're right, but I'm a poor woman, and now I'm very upset. We can't stay here like this; I'm going out to look for someone to help us. I'll find someone, who can help me.

Ugo

Not yet, wait. You can write, can't you?

Cesira

Well, more or less.

Ugo

Then take a piece of paper and a pencil. You mustn't make any mistake, and remember everything.

Cesira

Do you want to write to someone?

Ugo

Try to write everything I say, as best you can.

And with her doubtful handwriting, Cesira slowly transcribed the words that Ugo gave her. For her it was an exceptional effort; she had never written anything, except, occasionally, a few notes which read: *Lectric lite, beens, prise of telegram.* Ugo dictated to her slowly, trying to adapt himself to her powers of transcription. Cesira, absorbed in her effort to be exact, understood nothing of what the master was making her write, and when at a certain point Adele's children were mentioned, in order to confirm what he was thinking, Ugo said:

'She will have them, I tell you she'll have them.'

'What?' Cesira asked, lifting her eyes from the paper.

'Oh, nothing, nothing; write a little more, we've almost finished.'

After half an hour Cesira's effort finished.

'Gianni will see that this is attended to,' said Ugo. 'Now you had better hand me the paper so I can sign it. I know that's the way it's done.'

Cesira helped him, vaguely beginning to understand what it was the master had dictated to her.

'Don't let anyone read this paper before showing it to Signor Gianni, if I don't see him.'

'But of course you'll see him,' the woman protested energetically, touching his face with her hand and looking at him with a sweet smile.

'Of course I will,' Ugo answered, 'but now I'm really tired.' His forehead was

cold and damp, his lips almost black, and his eyes had grown darker, almost sunk into their sockets.

X

At last Cesira decided to go out. It seemed as if the landscape had been flooded with soldiers. They were everywhere; the plain seethed with them, on the hills they were coming out all over the place. Most of them were dark-skinned or altogether black. The first white face Cesira saw, she approached; no one paid any attention to her.

'I need a doctor, there's a man dying.' But he didn't understand, looked at her a moment, shook his head; and it was the same with her next attempts. Then the woman went back to the house, frightened by those people, and even more by the thought of her young master up there alone on the floor of the living-room. She had barely returned when Faldella and Pietrone followed her in, a gun on their shoulders, frightening her.

'Don't be afraid, it's us.'

Seeing Ugo stretched out on the improvised bed on the floor, Pietrone let out a rough exclamation, and Ugo, who seemed no longer able to hear anything, had a slight expression of pain cross his face; perhaps this last perception of the world of the others helped him move away more happily from all he was leaving.

'What shall we do?' the two men asked each other.

For some time Ugo had not spoken, and the light in his eyes seemed extinguished.

'A nice round hole in his stomach,' said Faldella. And they stood there without knowing what to do.

'Signor Gianni will be along in a while. He'll know what to do all right; he always knows what to do.'

'He shouldn't be long now,' said Faldella.

'He'll be very upset; he was worried; he kept worrying about his friend. What I say is: how could anyone be so obstinate; what did you have to stay here for, all alone?'

'We stayed in our own house, minding our own business,' Cesira answered Pietrone abruptly, momentarily resuming her old tone of voice.

'If only he could speak,' said Pietrone.

Cesira had again leaned over her master and forgotten about the men. Ugo's breath was as light as a child's, and the woman stayed listening to it for a long time, dreaming: it was as if it were yesterday.

When Gianni arrived along with Adele and her aunt and uncle, the silent Gattegna no longer had anything to add to the few sentences he had spoken throughout his obscure existence.

In the bedroom where Ugo had been carried, the newcomers found not only Cesira and the two men, but a couple of doctors in shorts with effeminate white legs.

'If he had been attended to in time, it wouldn't have been difficult to save him, but now there's nothing we can do.'

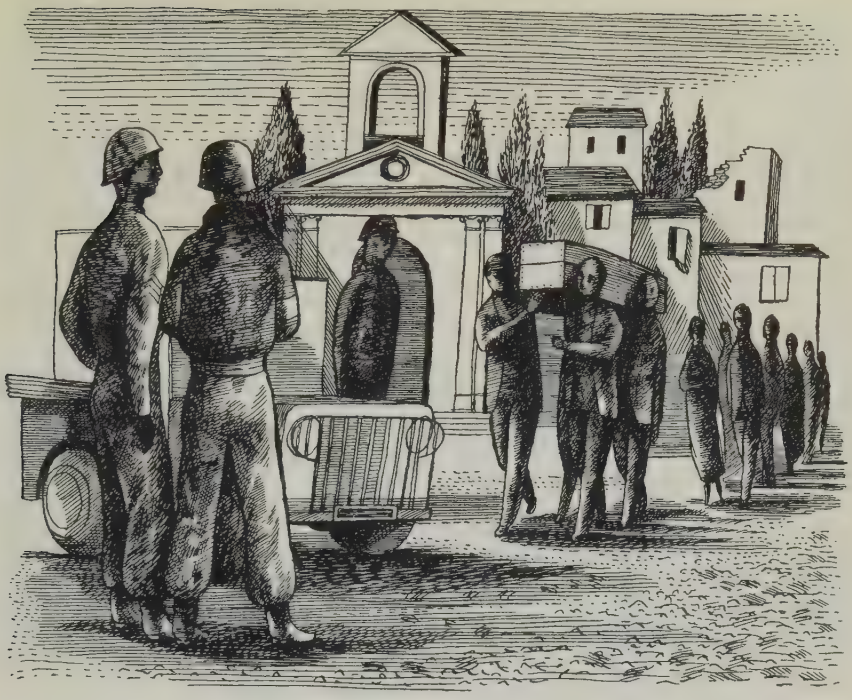
In fact, a few minutes later, Ugo closed his lids even more tightly, and without anyone noticing it, died slowly, in silence, alone.

XI

The peasants were once more coming down towards the foothills and the plain, pushing the ox-carts ahead of them which they had hidden in the woods or in the farms high up in the mountains, their horses loaded down with sacks and useless household equipment. Baccelli came too, at the head of a caravan of carts on which he had loaded all the most useful equipment of the Gattegna properties. There were also many armed men from other regions, tanned by the sun and with broken boots.

The Negroes had all moved north in a hurry to reach the slopes of the Apuan Alps; the whole countryside was now filled with thousands and thousands of young men in shorts, smiling and friendly, demanding and rough, all furnished with small, fast cars.

The village churchbell was heard again after many days of silence, tolling for the dead. The first peals had barely gone out across the plain when an improvised coffin, made out of a few nailed planks, was seen to appear from the Big House, and Ugo's body wound its way down the paths of the hill on the shoulders of four peasants. Behind walked Adele, her aunt and uncle, Cesira, and Baccelli, all in silence; then came a long line of men and women, and slightly to one side, Gianni. The new



soldiers who were moving through the area watched the sad and disconnected funeral procession with curiosity, stopped for a moment, surprised, then went on their way.

The bell continued its melancholy pealing.

And there again was that small square patch, enclosed by four bare walls half covered with creepers, that unadorned chapel on which the Gattegna 'G' was carved with its three antique flakes of gold still shining like pupils enriched by a century of sunlight, made perennially serene by the constant gaze of a corner of the world really inaccessible to the worries of men.

The churchbell was silent and everyone went home.

Ugo's relatives, with Cesira and Baccelli, went back to the Big House; everyone was held by a different sadness, which cut differently and more or less deeply into their hearts, to last for different periods of time.

In the house Cesira waited for a moment when no one was noticing her, to go and sit in her armchair; only then, after all those days, did she pick up the thread of her thoughts which spontaneously turned from the present to the past.

She had not cried, except for that night three days earlier, and now she still didn't cry, but was thinking, remembering.

In the sitting-room Rosano broke the silence; Gianni and Baccelli were also there, Baccelli a little to one side, not knowing what to think.

'This shouldn't have happened.'

'Be quiet, father.'

'He was the last of the family.'

'Quiet, mother.'

Then Cesira came back with the piece of paper which Ugo had made her write; she handed it to Gianni and went back to the kitchen. Gianni started to read it, read it again without saying a word and passed it on to Baccelli, then Adele's parents read it and Rosano said:

'What extraordinary writing!' Then added: 'now it must all be made legal, and that is up to you, it seems, Gianni.'

Gianni looked at him with contempt.

'I really don't know what's come over you, father.'

'There are some names I don't know.' Adele's father went on addressing Gianni.

'I know them,' said Gianni coldly. 'Try to think of something else, at least for the moment.'

'We'll see to it later, of course,' said Baccelli with compunction and very excited; he had also seen his name on the paper and had been overwhelmed by the size of the fortune which came to him, but was also honest and simple enough already to feel the pleasure.

He greeted everyone respectfully, then went off muttering that he would come back in due course to speak with Signor Gianni.

'We should be going too. Goodness knows what's happening in town; it would be better to try to get there as soon as possible to see what's happening to the house,' said Rosano addressing the women.

'How will we get there?' asked Adele.

'Let's stand on the road, perhaps we'll get a lift.'

On the road they did not have to wait long. As they stood wide-eyed watching the myriads of cars and other vehicles of all sorts which were headed towards the city, two blonde boys in shorts stopped a small car, looked at Adele with big happy smiles, and motioned her to get in.

'Yes, yes, you too,' they answered laughingly, pointing at her parents; and all three nestling on that strange speedy box, they set off. The two blonde soldiers kept turning and making friendly gestures to Adele who ended up by smiling, quite pleased.

XII

Gianni and Cesira were left alone. Cesira seemed suddenly aged, showing her real age, walking bent over. Towards evening she started to set the table for Gianni.

Gianni, left alone, had gone up to his friend's bedroom, had leaned against the window-sill and watched the noisy passage of the new army without thinking of anything. Then he had started walking up and down the room, and each of the objects that was still there attracted his attention for a long time. On the desk he saw a few notes on which Ugo used to write with a pencil; in fact something was written on them; he started to look at them as he had done with the objects, but not touching them, not even moving them slightly, contenting himself with deciphering what he could see on the topmost one: . . . *nothing to resolve, no problems. To know how to wait is the most difficult task, no one knows how to do it; but there is an end even for those who don't know how to wait. Toil, patience, toil, toi, to. . . .*

He stayed for a moment thinking, then went down and, sitting at the table, asked Cesira:

'Didn't Signor Ugo say anything during the last few days, Cesira?'

'I don't know. He spoke, but I'm uneducated, Signor Gianni.'

'And the paper you wrote?'

'He dictated it to me; he was already very ill; I don't know how to write, but I put down every word he said without skipping any.'

'I saw it, Cesira. You did it very well.'

'I did the best I could.'

'He thought of everyone, did you see?'

'Everyone he knew.'

'What a strange man.'

'He wasn't strange, he was a Gattegna.'

'Now you can take a rest, you can retire peacefully to the house which is left you in the will.'

'Oh, no,' said Cesira with violence. 'I will stay here.'

'But the house will belong to Signorina Adele if she marries.'

'Well, then,' said the woman after a long pause, 'I will stay here and serve Miss Adele.'

'But you could have a better life.'

'A better life, me? . . . a better life . . . ' And she raised a finger to the sky with a solemn gesture which intimidated Gianni.

Now the silence in the house drew down around Gianni almost like a friendly caress, and at times he almost had the desire to turn, as if there were someone near him. 'Inside of me there will always be something of that man,' he thought, 'even if I didn't want it there.' And this filled him with sadness and peacefulness both at the same time.

THE LADY WHO DIDN'T WASTE WORDS

HAMILTON MACALLISTER

SHE had legs that stuck down from her dress as if they ought to have had castors on them, and under each ear was a thick glass ball. They were the only two passengers in the whole of the last carriage. They'd sat there in silence, until he said, 'Excuse me, d'you mind?' He held his pipe in his hand.

She just smiled. One front tooth was missing, and one was as black as soot.

'D'you mind if I smoke?'

She continued to smile: he took in her various oddities. 'I said,' he said, 'd'you mind if I smoke?'

'Words,' she said to him, 'that aren't in the praise of God are wasted words.'

'I'm sorry.' He put it back in his pocket, and fixed his eye on a picture of Barnard Castle. After a bit he gave her a quick look: she was smiling full at him. He looked away and prepared to sleep.

He opened his eyes in a tunnel that was so dark he couldn't even see the walls of the compartment. No lights went on: an old, decrepit carriage, without corridors, peeling and dirty. He kept his eyes open in the close, dusty blackness, and out of it came the lady's smile, facing him. She had moved.

He produced a small smile that got itself twisted, and closed his eyes again.

But he didn't sleep. He drowsed, and returned sharply to consciousness with the dark over his retina again. He opened his eyes in the complete blackness. He wondered if she were still smiling. But when the light returned, she was there no longer.

Then he saw that she had moved on to his seat, and was two or three feet away, by his side.

It was becoming annoying. He gave her a deliberate, angry look. She was still smiling at him, face half-turned; she looked quite stupid, obviously was. He turned his attention to the hedges, opening and closing past the window. They were getting into the mountains.

They were in another tunnel soon. The four sharp cries of the wheels became dull. And now he began to feel an intense discomfort and irritation. He moved his right hand up and down the wood in his preoccupation. He met the line of the communication cord, just within reach, which he caressed with one finger. He was furious with himself. He dropped his hand and managed to pull himself together just before they left the tunnel.

She'd moved again. She'd edged along the seat till she was about two feet from him: he could see this out of the corner of his eye. He opened his mouth to say something angry and she said, smiling and waggishly shaking her head, 'It's no good pulling the communication cord in a tunnel. Trains never stop in tunnels.'

After that they sat together in silence till they entered the next tunnel.

In the darkness he couldn't hear the slightest movement, but he felt her smile on him, all the time. Gradually he began to have an extraordinary feeling that she was crawling past his legs, still smiling up at him as she crawled. His legs tingled all over but he felt he couldn't move them an inch. He nodded his head violently up and down and pressed into the seat with his fists, and this helped him slightly. Suddenly the light came back.

The lady was on the other side again, so she had moved past him. Furious, he looked straight at her to tell her to damn well stay where she was, but as he encountered the impact of her silly smile, the words dried in his mouth.

In the daylight it was absurd. Physically, she was intensively repulsive. He could feel sorry for her, out of the tunnels; she was an obvious mental, half his size. When he saw the next tunnel coming up—and it was going to be the main one, by the look of the mountain that was folding over them—he'd made up his mind that he wasn't going to bother with her; she could prowl about where she wanted. For a minute or two he sat still, relaxed.

Very cautiously he put out his left hand an inch or two. After another minute of tunnel he raised it to shoulder level, and did the same. The third time he touched something, soft and cold like the horn of a snail, so yielding as to be almost unfelt. Like a snail's horn, it withdrew. Then it came again. Then it stayed. He felt its length: oval, and underneath it hung a round glass ball. It moved closer.

He pulled the communication cord.

The train pulled clear of the tunnel before it stopped. There was a peculiar sort of silence, after which he heard the guard coming down the track.

The lady sat by his side. He looked at her, and found her smiling away. 'What's the idea?' he said.

She put her hand to her mouth and said, 'Sh!'

'What d'you mean?' He could hear the guard coming nearer, looking in at the carriages as he passed.

'Words—' she said, smiling.

'Oh to Hell!' he said. He felt indescribably foolish. He was a heavy man, fat and powerful, and she was dumpy—a sticky-looking woman. He grabbed his suitcase and opened the door on the other side from the approaching guard. There was a rail track and a steep drop over the embankment. He looked back at the lady; she had stopped smiling at last, and was looking shocked now. Then he jumped, in front of an express train.

The guard opened the carriage door and said, 'Yes, lady?' He could see that this was the one.

But she just sat very still, looking shocked.

'Did you pull the cord?' he said. But her eyes, in dumb horror, indicated the swinging door. He crossed the carriage and looked out: the express had gone by with a roar and a flicker of windows. 'Good—God!' he said, 'Well I've served the railways for fifteen years and this is IT.' He went back and took the lady's hand, very sympathetically. 'Did 'e do anything to you afore 'e jumped out?' The poor old thing was trembling. She wouldn't say anything. 'Maybe 'e got what 'e deserved,'

he said. 'Are you all right then, lady?'

He beckoned to a doctor whom he had picked up on his way down. 'Just look aht the other side,' he whispered. The doctor looked, and told the guard there was nothing left to do. Sightseers had begun to collect, looking into the carriage and at the remains of the man, with a blank, reserved look on their faces, like people suddenly asked to give money. They were sent back to their carriages, and the doctor stayed with the lady.

He was a neat, dark man. He wore rimless glasses, and had a quiet, scientific righteousness. He said to her, 'Now what is your name please, madam?'

But she said nothing. She sat very still, looking shaken.

'I take it you're not—related?' He indicated the other door.

'We're all brothers in the sight of Him.'

'Oh, yes.'

The train clanked into motion again, and the doctor sat down by her. He said, 'I'm a doctor, and I'm used to these things, you know. Now the coroner will want to know just what he did. You know that, don't you? Don't worry, you'll be all right now.'

She smiled at him.

The doctor smiled back. 'Can I have your name and address?'

'Words that aren't to the praise of the Lord are wasted,' she said.

'Yes.' He flicked his note-book. 'Bit of a shock, eh?'

She said nothing.

'Must have been a bit of a shock.'

He looked at her intently. Something about him seemed to reassure her, and she leaned right up to his face and whispered, 'I looked at him!'

'Yes?' He opened his note-book again.

'He said, "To Hell!" '

'Yes?'

'And the Lord—struck!' Then she closed her mouth tight, and looked at the doctor with big, shocked eyes.

He put away his note-book and withdrew an inch or two from her. 'I see,' he said. She followed him along the seat, and opened her mouth to say something else, then thought the better of it. She broke out into smiles again. They sat in silence, very close together, till they reached the next station. When the train stopped, the doctor got up and asked briskly, 'Now before I go, won't you give me your name and address?'

For an answer she took him by the lapels of his coat and pulled his face right down to hers. She was looking very pleased with herself, as if she had made a discovery. 'I'm an angel of the Lord,' she whispered.

'I see,' the doctor said again, disengaging himself. He left the carriage.

It was now quite dark. For the rest of the journey she was on her own again. Each time the train stopped, the guard, as he walked past with his flag, looked in. She smiled at him, and he said, 'All right?' 'Wouldn't you like to come and sit in the van then?' he said at the last stop. She smiled in answer. 'No?' he said. 'It'd be company now!'

'Sh!' she said.

'Ah, yes,' he said. The doctor was with him. They went down the platform, talking, and the train moved on.

Suddenly there was a low boom of thunder. Black clouds, which had hurried the night on, were bringing a storm. The night became charged with electricity. The thunder and flashes grew swiftly stronger and closer together; it was coming right at them. As it folded over the train like a mountain, a flash lit up the compartment, and there was a terrific clap. She stood up, and opened the carriage door. Her eyes glittered with excitement; she stood half in and half out of the door, waiting for something to happen. Lightning lit her up, and thunder followed, crashing up and down the sky. But nothing happened.

The storm had rushed to its climax and was speeding away. The apocalypse passed into wet black normality. The lightning lost its jagged edge, and after a while a long low sweeping noise indicated rain.

She hung on, and each rumble of thunder sounded as if it would be the last. The rumbling now sounded infinitely far away, like the troubles of another planet, and seemed to be fading more quickly, like the expanding galaxies, as it moved further away. Eventually she let go her hold, while the thunder was still just audible,

leaving the door swinging open behind her in the beating rain. The sky cleared; the rain stopped, and the train slowed into the terminus.

When it had pulled to a stop, the guard came to the window again. He jumped in; 'She's hopped it!' he called, and noticed the far door open again. 'She's jumped out like the other one,' he said. The doctor pushed past behind him. 'It's my fault,' he cried, looking out; he'd turned bright-red with embarrassment and annoyance. 'She's gone,' said the guard, 'gone from our ken.' 'That's nonsense, man, go and ring down the line again.' 'She's gone the way she came.' 'Don't be *absurd*,' cried the doctor. They both began talking at once, until the stationmaster, who had come in behind them, was abruptly revealed to them by the electric light which now unexpectedly came on.

They stood and listened to the rain, as if they expected to hear the lady come pattering down the track after them. The guard said to the stationmaster, 'She said she was an angel of the Lord!'

He was a hard-bitten old man with a black skin, and he took this without surprise. After a minute or two of silence, he said slowly and contemptuously, 'Now there'll be an inquiry.'

He went to the far side of the compartment, and slowly pushed one finger four inches down the wall, making a path in the dust. Then he held his finger in front of the guard: 'Look at this.'

The guard became immediately damped. 'Aye; it's shocking.'

'Right,' said the stationmaster, and the two of them left the compartment together, like two animals of the same breed, leaving the fretting doctor to follow. With its electric light on, the carriage began to lurch and grind towards the siding.

HIGHBURY

ERNEST FROST

It was that boy's dream of a sun's confectionery,
and colours which lay in a pupa's shell of ice
and winter fireworks, when exploring we went hunting
summer enticements in the parched lands of Highbury Park.

That boy could imagine spiked mountains of angelica
and blue thunder in crevices, and he said, swearing on oath,
'Trains climb steep mountains in the Bernese Oberland;
everything there's as bright as Joseph's coat.'

Highbury's sooty grove would lead me homewards—
I thought the smoky sunset over Pentonville
would engage bright engines to hear my daft wishes
and take me elated to the places that boy knew.

Then, in the winter, lamplit down black terraces,
I, disenchanted, found his secret out
Magic lanterns threw pictures with 'Made in Germany'
bobbing on torn-up sheets in that boy's house.

Bobbing on torn-up sheets his huntsman brother,
the chalet station and the glacier,
the fabulous towns pink in the lakes, the boating,
and the boy as beautiful as a swan sauntering by.

A LETTER FROM VIENNA

MICHAEL SWAN

In a city one has never visited before, the revealing images arrive fortuitously, with a strange lack of logic—perhaps because the preconceptions are rarely found to have been true; the mind becomes sensitive to images which had once seemed irrelevant, and sees in them an unaccountable significance. Why, I wonder, should I feel so attached to the scene from my hotel window?—the sight of children playing beneath the dead eyes of the baroque façade of the Liechtenstein Palace, with its sombre stucco at the moment where it seems inevitable that it will crumble and fall. The children sing little songs reminiscent of *Ringel, Ringel, Rosenkranz,* but I cannot make out the tunes properly against the noise of the traffic. As they play, the children's balls land among the cabbages and tomato rows which have replaced the lawns; their mothers sit talking under the trees in front of a moss-covered statue. It is all just as it was on the evening of my first day in Vienna nearly three weeks ago —but now it has become no mean speck among the sensations which have composed Vienna for me during these few weeks, an image which I can twist and turn in my mind, to make of it a symbol for so many purposes. Two weeks ago I knew no other images than the four in a jeep or the taxi-driver who answered my questions about life in Vienna today with the simple phrase: '*Ah, immer lustig ist der Wiener*—the Viennese is always happy.' What he said, I came to see, was true, but one soon realised that it was not enough to applaud the Viennese for a cheerful optimism, or to feel that their nature is to laugh and not care when the Russian empire is twenty-five miles away and their country depends for its existence on the beneficence of America. Centuries of invasion and occupation from the East—the Turks who scaled the machicolated churches which defended the town—have taught them to discover a resignation which has the appearance of gaiety. The modern version of this was not difficult to discover, for a superficial freedom and cultural contact with Western Europe have returned; there is good food and beer and music, and the village wine-gardens at Sievering or Grinzing are filled every night with Viennese drinking Heuriger wine, listening to zither music.

Yet, as the sensations grow and form their shape, one feels that it is not those things which are particular and contemporary that compose the underlying sadness, that in Vienna rather than provincial Austria the tragedy of the history of the country may be felt potently. It would be untrue to say that the sadness began only when the Austrian Empire was destroyed in 1918, for this was the mere *coup de grâce.* Vienna under Francis Joseph showed its feathers like a peacock before death; the murder and suicide at Mayerling and the murder of Francis Joseph's brother, Maximilian, tell truer stories than the grandiose buildings on the Ring. While Grillparzer's message that all endeavour is futile and the bitter melancholy of Schnitzler tell the truest, I like to imagine that the whole story of Austria is contained in the title of Grillparzer's play which is now being performed at the Burgtheater—*König Ottokars Glück und Ende* (*King Ottokar's Good Fortune and Death*). The final death came and Vienna returned to normal, to being an outpost after two hundred years of unnatural centrality.

Two days ago I met a survivor from this past: an old man of eighty-five of whom I asked the way. I walked with him for some time and when he told me his age and that he had lived in Vienna all his life, I was delighted, for here was somebody who had seen the sleek broughams clatter out to Grinzing for their secret assignations, would have seen the imperial glories in the courtyard of the Hofburg. I asked him about the Vienna of his youth and he stopped in the crowded street, took my

arm and said ecstatically '*Das Leben war wunderbar, wunderbar!*—Life was marvellous!', and went on to say that the country was so rich and so happy until that devil Wilson cut her throat. His view of his country's history is typical of the mass of 'little men' who have always composed the largest social formation in the country. It is for his sons and grandsons that films like *Wien Tanzt*, a film about Johann Strauss, or *Maria Teresa*, are made, and nineteenth-century operettas about high-life are produced; it is his sons, too, who are a little shocked by the cynicism of *La Ronde* and who never read Schnitzler precisely because he revealed the worm behind the lovely face; who, again, snort and hurry their wives past the erotic Surrealism of Rudolf Hausner at an exhibition at the excellent Art Club. And it is for them that the Americans, with great understanding, have given money for the rebuilding of such comforting signs of past grandeur as the Opera on the Ring (and none for the building of new houses). For the petty bourgeois—or *Spiessburger* as he is called here—has always felt the rightness of grand buildings, conscious of his position as a spectator of such expressions of Austrian courtly culture as Fischer von Erlach's great Josefsplatz or the Upper Belvedere of Lukas von Hildebrandt. They were spectators, too, of the buildings on the Ring which were built supposedly as symbols of the unity between the *Spiessburger* and the nobility which followed the Revolution of 1848. Both needed each other, for there was no strong middle-class, the usual implementers of revolution, to take over the Government. The compromise was odd, the nobility becoming the industrialists so that the *Spiessburger* should remain more or less where they had always been. (Incidentally, I noticed this pattern when reading the history of Salzburg, where the architecture has none of the *Burger* individualism of south German towns because it was created by princely archbishops and their court, with the people of the town merely serving as retainers.) The symbol of the nineteenth-century compromise was the *Beschwichtigungshofrat*, or Court Commissioner for Compromises, whose job was to go to scenes of disturbance in the Empire and discover a solution pleasing to all parties.

The charming old man, who told me how wonderful life had been fifty years ago, has his opposite in his own class, the malcontents who revenged themselves on the nobility in 1919 by destroying them; today there are no titles in Austria but in the Café Mozart every day you may hear the waiters delighting in the opportunity to say '*Herr Gräf*' or '*Fräulein Baronin*' to an owner of a jewellery business or a secretary from the Foreign Office. The other day I read an article in the *Salzburger Nachrichten* on the future of Austria, by Dr. Otto Habsburg; it took me some time to realise that this is now the title of the hereditary ruler of Austria, Prince Otto von Habsburg. But to return to the malcontent; at his most unpleasant he took the form of Adolf Hitler. Hitler transferred the longing of some elements of his class for political and cultural power to the larger world of Germany. His tastes were those of the Austrian *Spiessburger*—the horror of decadence in painting, the desire to appear sexually irreproachable, and the admiration for the grandiose. He banned Büchner and a local politician in Salzburg this year led an outcry against what he called the '*Schund und Schmutz*' of *Wozzeck*, which was performed there for the festival. Hitler's mania for imperial conquest had its psychological roots in the social formation of the Austrian Empire perhaps more than in the defeat of Germany in 1918.

Vienna, more than most towns, may only be apprehended by a free play of mind, a refusal to see it in terms of Russian occupation, of Austria paying Russia for her own oil or the frequent disappearances of policemen or functionaries who have met the disapproval of the commissars at the Hotel Imperial. These, indeed, must have their part in the contradictions and complications of Vienna. Its complication has always been the source of its fascination; in the narrow, twisting streets of the Old Town—a complication of its own—live so many people whose blood is a *mélange* of three or four Middle European strains, which sometimes rises to the heights in the creation of a Hedy Lemarr. Like an eastern Paris, Vienna has attracted and

assimilated the precious minds of Eastern Europe — Mozart, Beethoven, Gluck, Freud, Rheinhardt, Kafka, and even the not so precious minds; for in 1911 Mussolini was a Viennese street-sweeper, Hitler had a post at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, and Stalin was writing his first book in the splendid hall of the National Library. Complication is added still yet to this, since Vienna rejects and assimilates at the same time, conservatively banning Grillparzer's plays and allowing him only posthumous glory, permitting Mozart to die a pauper and rejecting Freud; it is only this year that the intellectuals have begun to read Kafka. And now, today, Vienna knows that the three physical acts of rejection, of 1918, 1934 and 1938 were a form of intellectual suicide; so few of the exiles have returned, and those who have are different men, seeming to accept the traditional isolation of the Viennese intellectual as a still centre from which to speak to the whole of Europe. 'The real things come from silence,' the Catholic writer, Friedrich Heer, said to me, and it is in the vigorous silence of Vienna that an artist like Fritz Wotruba now works.

Wotruba was born in Vienna of Hungarian parents, and lived in exile in Switzerland from 1938 to 1945. He despises the conservative Viennese attitude to art, uses Vienna as a workshop where he is undistracted by the noise of culture which makes Paris intolerable for him; yet it is for Paris and the other capitals of Europe that he works—and in the catalogue to his Paris exhibition of 1948 Jean Cassou wrote: '*Il est actuellement une des grandes figures de la sculpture européenne.*' His is typical of the Viennese artist's attitude to the political situation here; he is quite untroubled by it and feels that the Russians will go, one day. Although he insists that he has no interest in politics, his political remarks are shrewd. For instance, he told me that the Russians have a mentality which can happily wait twenty years for action, while the British and Americans have a need for decisive action, and it is here that the greatest danger lies. Wotruba's latest period is interesting because, although he is 'European' minded, he has caught the prevailing interest in Vienna in movements which have died, or are dying, in the rest of Europe. For twenty years he was a classicist sculptor, obviously inspired by the 'workmanlike' possibilities of Michelangelo's Slaves. In 1946 he carved his 'Female Cathedral' in this manner, and then suddenly turned to a form of Cubism as seen through the eyes of Aztec sculpture. He, like the great Cubists, is fascinated by the infinite relationships of the human form, and he is attempting, as he puts it, to tell 'the story of the human figure'. His '*Cathedrale Humaine*' (1949) is a sophisticatedly primitive study of the planes of the human body, typical of his recent work. I could not help feeling that he was at the beginning of a new trail, and one only comprehends his vision when one sees his series of figure drawings, drawings of a wonderful intensity and attraction. But Viennese lateness in discovering the modern trends does not necessarily mean a mere peripheral mannerism, but rather an independent version of it. One sees the process working in the early eighteenth century, with the baroque architecture of Erlach the elder and Hildebrandt, who were superficially working in the style of seventeenth-century Rome. Yet the Karlskirche and the Kollegienkirche of Erlach and the Belvedere and Peterskirche of Hildebrandt are great works of art in their own right, unique, and with an interior *ordonnance* which is well in advance of Bernini or Borromini. Thus, too, did Mozart take the Italian opera style to a greater glory, and the Biedermayer style is no mere echo of Empire or Regency. In painting the late discovery has not meant an advancement. I have been constantly told here that I should see the works of the eighteenth-century baroque painters, Maulpertsch and 'Kremser' Schmidt, and duly I went to see Maulpertsch's frescoes in the church of Maria in Paristiner. They seemed to be no better than those of a third-rate follower of a lesser Carraci, but when an opportunity arose to go to Krems, I seized it, in order to see the large exhibition of Schmidt's work there. With few exceptions, all seemed very bad, a mixture of late sixteenth-century Venetians, Tiepolo, Magnasco and Rembrandt. The commissionaire at the door asked us, with

fine enthusiasm, what we thought of the work and we told him we liked a few of the pictures. 'He painted three thousand pictures,' he said, to win us round, and when we were unmoved, continued, 'He never had a lesson in his life,' and then, finally, in desperation, 'But they're two hundred years old!'

To return to modern art. The abstract painters here don't appear to be of great interest. They tend to think of Cubism as no more than a matter of angles, seem unaware that it was an attempt to probe the mysteries of a fourth dimension. But the Surrealist painter, Rudolf Hausner, is an excellent example of the creative conservatism of Viennese art. He was too young at the time of the *Anschluss* to have been conscious of Surrealism, and after 1938 all artists in Vienna were cut off from the movements of Western Europe. He fought in the war and at one time was isolated for a month in a room of a house with two companions. He would lie staring at the pattern of the woodwork on the wall, and found that he was turning it into fantastic designs, as he had turned shadows and objects into terrifying visions as a child. It was from this, and this alone, he assures me, that he arrived at his version of Surrealism, and it was not until 1945, when a friend of his who had spent the war in Switzerland showed him some Dali reproductions, that he had any idea such work existed. I could myself, at first, find very little difference between Hausner's work and the orthodox Surrealism of the thirties, apart from a technical proficiency which is, if anything, greater than Dali's; but after talking to Hausner I realised that he sees his present work as no more than a necessary phase, a means to an admirable end—a contribution to what he calls 'the rebuilding of the house', the reunification of the 'isms'. It is not surprising that the painters he most admires are Leonardo and Piero della Francesca.

Unlike the rest of the Viennese intelligentsia, the artists form a community with a Bohemianism which one associates with Paris of the twenties. They buy each other's works—since there are few others to buy them; their wives work in sugar factories or shops in order to keep them—an accepted convention here. The other evening I went to a typical party in the garden of a studio near the Prater. Chinese lanterns were hung from tree to tree. Over an open charcoal stove two vast pieces of veal were turning on a spit, while potatoes roasted over a grill and melanzana quietly sizzled in a pan. Pretty girls with long black hair and fringes came constantly to fill one's glass with Heuriger, and we talked and ate the delicious meat with our fingers, gradually got drunk until the wine was finished. At midnight we went into the studio, drank more and danced. It was a simple, pleasant evening—the way the Viennese take the pleasure they find so necessary.

There is some relationship between the position of the artist here and that of the composer. One would expect that the painters and sculptors would be struggling for a style, but it seems tragic that Vienna, the greatest centre of European music from Gluck to Schönberg, should have, on the one side, so many worthless composers hopelessly producing bad pastiche of Richard Strauss and, on the other, young composers of great talent groping in the dark. After the war Schönberg's two pupils, Hanns Jelinek and Hans Erich Apostel, returned to the Academy as teachers and introduced atonalism to their students. For two or three years it seemed possible that the 'Vienna School' of atonalism might be continued. Paul Kont, who is now thirty-one, was the most brilliant of the young composers who found themselves excited by the dodecanal system, but when I went to hear him play his music, he refused to play anything written in this style. It seemed to him to lead nowhere, and although he has profound respect for Schönberg, he has completely rejected him. He played his music for me in his flat in a crumbling house which stands alone in an acre of bomb damage. First, the *Two Sonatas* of 1949, a work of great rhythmic vitality with an attractive melodic line, which yet failed to be more than interesting. Then he played his set of *European Dances*, written last year; they arose out of a study of the national dance forms of Europe and, in the traditionally assimilative Viennese manner, his aim was

to produce a dance form which could be truly European—not, I hasten to add, by coupling a phrase from an Austrian *Ländler* with a phrase from a Spanish *coranto*, but by an intellectual study of the psychological and technical relationships between the various dances. It is an immensely attractive work, certainly a little influenced by Bartok, and the B.B.C. would do well if they asked to see the score. Finally, Kont played his most recent composition, a work of pure, abstract musical thought, *Variations on the Basic Elements of Music*, which I found brilliant and absorbing, a highly serious work of a professional musician, which should certainly be performed in England. 'Professionalism' is the true word for Austrian music, and when I talked with Kont about English music, he spoke of it in the same terms as had another young German-Austrian composer, Gottfried von Einim, and the Berlin composer Boris Blacher; English music, for them all, was unprofessional. 'You may have some first-rate composers in England in ten or twenty years,' Blacher had said, 'but now they're all so *unprofessional*! But we play all your second-rate composers here—why don't you play some of ours?' Kont was more serious. Britten, for him, was a composer of too great facility, with the simplicity of a simple mind rather than the simplified complexity of Stravinsky or Carl Orff. 'It *is* easier for him,' he went on, 'than it is for us, because he has little more to do than to take up where Purcell left off'—and there, I thought, was perhaps the key to the Viennese composers' attitude to English music. There they are in the main-stream of European music, conscious that it is dying, struggling for rejuvenescence through a mass of complexity, while Britten, unfettered by a heavy tradition, sings but as the linnet sings and sings because he must. The pure simplicity of Britten is something which the Viennese rejects because it can never be his.

I have mentioned no writers yet. The difficulties of the serious writer here are greater than in any other European country—I mean the physical difficulties, for there is no censorship or limitation of free speech even in the Russian Zone. With a population of seven millions, the potential audience for serious work is minute, and German and Swiss bookshops buy very few Austrian books, with the result that good novels may circulate in manuscript in Vienna and never find a publisher. The worst result of all is that writers must give more time to journalism than they would in Paris or London, and, since the Press is designed for the *Spiessburger* society, they are forced to lower their standards. One man who has refused to compromise is Friedrich Heer, the brilliant young editor of the Catholic political and literary weekly, *Die Furche*. Heer has written a two-volumed study of religious and political trends in Europe during the twelfth century, *Aufgang Europas*, which has placed him among the leading contemporary historians, but he has also written a novel, *Der achte Tag* (*The Eighth Day*) which is an Austrian *1984*. It was published under the name of Hermann Gode because, in Austria, a scholar loses face if he writes anything so frivolous as a novel. *Der achte Tag* is the best expression of the tragic and resigned optimism of the Viennese intelligentsia. *Die Furche* forces its readers to realise the daily tragedies of the country by publishing a weekly SOS column; in this week's issue a mother with five children, whose father has committed suicide, asks for clothing, and the story is given of an old man who lost everything through bombing, is being evicted from his bombed home and has taken all 'so much to heart that he has become very ill.' *Die Furche* asks for shoes and a winter coat for him as well as *Lebensmittel* or 'the means of life'.

Der achte Tag is about a family of decrepit Austrian nobility in the year 2050 who spend their days drinking wine, playing cards and talking, in their crumbling castle on the Croatian coast. They are hopeless and quite unproductive; barbarian hordes from the East make war against their country, occupy it and set fire to the castle. But when the fire has died down, the family is found amid the ruins still drinking wine, playing cards and talking. It is interesting to see how differently Heer sees the future from Orwell, and in an article in an Austrian literary monthly (again Catholic) I noticed the phrase '*orwellsche Panik*'. Orwell's

humanism took the form of a certainty that humanism was about to die; Heer's that nothing can kill it. I had the impression that Heer was the most articulate of the very potent Catholic element in the country. Austria, of course, is officially a Catholic country and any religious revival would be a stricter faith towards Mother Church. The religious revival came to Germany and Austria after the war, giving hope to the starving, comfort to the wretched. With the return of prosperity to Germany, the revival has subsided, but it is a sign of Austria's difficulties that the revival still continues here. Last Sunday afternoon I went to the lovely little Gothic church of Maria in Gestade and there, in every side chapel, was a figure praying with the ecstatic expression of a Zurburan. They were old people, certainly, but the young are showing their faith in the weeklies and monthlies—in, for instance, the excellent monthly *Wort und Wahrheit.*

A typical non-Catholic writer is Hans Weigel, whose name is mentioned everywhere, and who, by outspoken bitterness, has won for himself something of the position which Karl Krauss had at the beginning of the century. He is Jewish and spent the war in Switzerland, where he was treated badly and eased the time by planning, with his friends, the wonderful future of Viennese literature; they would start a new journal, bring to Vienna the new ideas of Western democracy, be the guardians of cultural excellence. Soon after his return Weigel found that his dreams were impossible, that he himself had changed. As early as 1947 he wrote a play called *Barabbas*, which is about a business man who reviews his life on his fiftieth birthday and realises that he has failed in everything. Weigel has written a novel and another play, both of which failed, but his reputation rests on his explosive cultural *feuilletons*. He is forty and has around him a circle of young men and women who have chosen him as their *Literaturführer*. They meet in cafés and discuss everything far into the night. This group, under Weigel's editorship, has just published an anthology, *Stimmen der Gegenwart* (*Voices of the Present*) whose general tone is nihilistic, hopeless and sexually agitated. Perhaps this is the voice of the Viennese future—if it is, the Catholic intelligentsia is doing what it can to combat this peripheral existentialism.

It is three days since I began this letter, and again I am looking from my window across to the children playing in the gardens of the Liechtenstein Palace. A few minutes ago a third stratum to this image came and went. I heard the distant sound of, it seemed, a Russian choir and, leaning out of the window, saw a hundred marching Russian soldiers happily singing together. They passed the palace and my hotel, and now I can just hear them as they approach the Ring. How extraordinary they are! A few days ago we took a tram-ride into the Russian Zone because we had been told that it was fascinating to watch the Russian soldiers at their task of non-fraternisation. They came in with expressionless faces, and when they felt their bodies touching those of Austrians, they moved to end the contact. So it had been when I had entered the Russian Zone at Semmering. I watched the young frontier guards board the train and examine the passports like automata. Without looking at me, a guard took my passport, saw it was British and walked off with it. I waited and he didn't return, then the train began to move and I jumped to the window, only to be tapped on the shoulder by the ticket-collector who had come to return me my passport. It was a mild reprisal for the frontier troubles at Saalfelden—about which, incidentally, a Communist paper has published a damaging little pamphlet called *The Battle of Saalfelden*. And now this cheerful, charming singing! I hope before I leave I shall hear it again. The maid came into my room a moment ago and I asked her if it often happens. 'Yes,' she said, 'sometimes—after all they, too, sing for the joy of living—*für die Freude des Lebens*.' And I thought of *Der achte Tag* and the family drinking wine among the ruins of their castle. Yes, there *is* an eighth day, and in Vienna, surrounded by all Europe's potentialities for horror, each made more potent by being closely met by such beauty, in Vienna, touched always by hidden sadness—here one feels an irrational confidence in the eighth day.

Wotruba *Human Cathedral*

Wotruba *Female Cathedral*

Rudolf Hausner *Die Rückkehr des Odysseus*

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

G. F. WATTS 1817-1904

BERTRAM NICHOLLS

I WAS agreeably surprised some time ago to hear a well-known critic declare on the radio that, since the death of G. F. Watts, no portrait painter had arisen who was his equal in stature. No truth, to be sure, could be more self-evident, no pikestaff plainer; but I should hardly have thought that it fitted very harmoniously into the framework of contemporary thought. There used to be a roomful of Watts's pictures at the Tate Gallery. A roomful was too much, but those who remember that room may be excused for thinking that something big in conception as well as in scale has been heaved out of the way to make space for rather a lot of trivialities. Few painters of his stature (for we come back to the word) have more shortcomings than Watts, but he was rarely trivial.

He could not escape from his own period, from the ideas that were in the air in his day; and so his approach to picture-making was by no means a clear-sighted one. He wandered along all manner of by-paths, slipped easily into the sentimental, and was capable of losing sight altogether of pictorial values in his absorption in some abstract moral conception. In his early days in Italy he acquired an accomplished technique, which he abandoned later on in England, adopting instead a manner which secured broken colour by means of heavily-loaded pigment, suggestive rather of plastering than painting. All these lapses from anything like sure artistry are manifest, and yet I think the radio critic was right in his use of the word stature. Watts towered above most of his contemporaries —or ours.

Characteristically, he offered *The Good Samaritan* to the Manchester City Art Gallery—or rather to 'the town of Manchester'—not as a work of art but in memory of a local philanthropist whom he held in honour. To what extent the picture may have kept that memory green, I do not know. I have known it as a work of art since my boyhood, but I only heard of the philanthropist the other day.[1] It is a very large picture in his early manner. The figures are over life-size, as is often the case with Watts. I think it is proper to describe this tendency as a weakness. He has a largeness of style, a massive dignity of design, which lose rather than gain by inflation to a supernatural scale. Into the greatness of the design—for it is a great design—there creeps a faint suggestion of the grandiose. The photograph emphasises this by falsifying the relations and greatly damaging the unity of the whole. In the picture the broadly-painted sky plays an important part. I am indebted to Mr. Baxandall for the word 'honey-coloured' to describe it. It is honey-coloured modulated to a warm grey, and it is beautifully related to the figures. But in the photograph it is not related to them at all. The figures are, as it were, cut out with a pair of scissors and stuck on a white ground, sullied here and there with some meaningless smears. And as invariably happens when a picture is wrong pictorially—wrong in tonal relation, wrong in colour relation, faulty in design, faulty in any purely pictorial quality—something is lost of that spirit of pity and compassion with which *The Good Samaritan* is emotionally charged.

For the picture itself is not wrong; it is full of that spirit—it is Watts at his very finest. And Watts at his finest is an artist not to be approached without humility.

[1] Through the kindness of Mr. David Baxandall, Curator, Manchester City Art Gallery

LETTER IV

W. S. GRAHAM

Night winked and endeared
Itself to language. Huge
Over the dark verge sauntered
Half the moon. Then all
Its shoal attending stared
Down on the calm and mewing
Firth and in a bright
Breath that night became
You in these words fondly
Through me, even becomes
Us now. And casts me always
Through who I thought I was.
May love not cast us out.

My dear, know me by the voice
That speaks outside my choice
And speaks our double breath
Into this formal death.

My dear, here and happy
We are cast off away
Swanning through the slow
Shallows and shearing into
The first heave of the deep
Sea's lusty founds.

And out. Love, lie here happy
Here on this bed of nets.
Loosen the blouse of night.
It seems no time since we
Lay down to let Love pass.
Past? For almost I stoop
Backward to pick Love up
From where? My dear, all
You've had of me is always
Here. Lean here. Listen.
Though it is always going.
Nor does it say even
A part, but something else.
Time lowers it into bookmould
Filled with words that lied
To where they came from and
To where they went. Yet, lean
On your elbow here. Listen.

What a great way, so bright.
O the sea is meadowsweet.
That voice talking? It's from
Some family famous for
The sea. There's drink in it.
Where did he drown from, taken
By the sea's barbaric hooks?
Yet lie here, love. Listen
To that voice on the swell.
Old rogue with a skilful keel.
It is that voice which hears
The dog whelk's whimper
And the cockle's call come up
From the deep beds under
Those breaking prisms of water.
And hears old Mooney call Time
Bogtongued like doomsday over
The bar and even Mooney's
Hanging lamp lapping
The sweet oil from its bowl.

And each word, 'this' and 'this'
Is that night and your breath
Dying on mine moved out
On always the sea moving
Neither its help or comfort
Between us. Be held a while.

Old Calum's there. Listen.
This is his song. And he sings
To pass the time at the tiller.
He's sad drunk. Let him be.
He'll not see, that poor
Harper, bat-blind, stone-daft.
(That cough was Aconite.)
Let him go on. His harp's
Some strung breastbone but sweet.
It's often enough their habit,
The old and answered not.

'Then what a fine upstander
I was for the cause of Love.
And what a fine woman's
Man I went sauntering as.

I could sing a tear out of
The drunk or sober or deaf.
My love would lie pleasanter
Than ever she lay before.

Now she who younger lay
Lies lost in the husk of night.
May far my vanished dears
All in your bowers.'

5

Fondly from a beyond
His song moved to my hand
And moves as you move now.
Yet here's this song to move
With as the keel moves. Say
After me here. 'Unto
My person to be peer.'
And all holds us in the hull
That slips between the waving
Gates and the bow drives
Headlong through the salt
Thicket of the maiden sea.

And shall for Christsake always
Bleed down your streaming door.

STARS COMPARED TO WORMS

JAMES KIRKUP

Stars burn, and burrow through the infinite
Like slow, cold worms ravening eternal clays.
As dark soils pass through these, the blind, through those
Night is a sightless poverty refined to richer light.
But their bright course
Intersected, (by the sharp spade
Of comet or of asteroid
Untimely sliced), the high-winged horse
And all the inhabitants that haunt the house
Of heaven would no longer roam
Among the starry creatures of the midnight farm.

But shooting stars do us a useful harm,
Making our blindness wince at the dizzy sight
Of darkness tumbling over steps of light
That are no longer there. Always as two the severed worm
Finds life again.
We humorously live and die
Within their earth, the dusty sky
Where they are burned, and none are slain.
All shine in a heaven neither low nor high,
Where dying, out of mind and breath,
Lives on an air inspired to blazing dust by death.

NEW BOOKS

ECLIPSE OF THE RISING SUN By Toshikasu Kase. *Jonathan Cape.* 18s.

Reviewed by George Bilainkin

How far was the atomic bomb which fell on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, responsible for the formal surrender of Japan at 9.04 a.m. on 2 September? For the first time an answer is given authoritatively in a book full of disclosures by a young Japanese diplomatist. Mr. Kase, who studied at Amherst and Harvard, speaks English and other European languages with fluency: hence the value of his candid account of what took place in the Imperial Palace, at meetings with Prime Ministers, Army lords and others who forced the fabulously multiplying Japanese towards aggressive war and ignominious defeat. But 'Eclipse'—in the title of a volume indispensable for every student of world affairs—shows how even a topical production is already beaten by the rush of events in San Francisco in 1951.

Mr. Kase deals with the problem fairly and clearly. He saw, with a small group of others, that the war, whose coming he actively opposed, was lost eighteen months before it ended. But 'the domineering militarists . . . were still directing our national destiny at their pleasure . . . stubbornly refused to entertain for a moment the thought of giving up the struggle' even when Germany collapsed. Six influential personages, 'a steering committee' for peace moves, organised 'under terrible hazards', in case of discovery by the soldiers; they often changed the place of meeting, sometimes using the Diet air-raid shelter. On 8 June 1945, Kido, Lord Privy Seal, drew up a memorandum urging the immediate ending of war. Mr. Kase says the Emperor Hirohito next day ordered Kido to 'set his hand' to the task at once.

Sardonic history notes that Mr. Kase informed Hirohito at the time that Moscow offered a convenient channel, but that it would be wise also to approach London and Washington 'for a parallel negotiation'. On 18 June the War Council decreed that if Moscow helped at the beginning of July, the war should be ended 'if possible by September'. On 29 June, Hirota (former Premier, executed in 1948 as a war criminal) called for the fourth successive time on Malik, Soviet Ambassador in Tokyo, to beg in vain for some kind of Soviet-Japanese understanding or pact. On 12 July, Hirohito ordered Konoye, ex-Premier, to seek peace in Moscow. On 11 July, Sato, Ambassador in Moscow, called on Molotov, but on 13 July, when he carried another urgent appeal for peace, he was received by—Rozovsky, Vice-Commissar. On 16 July, Sato tried again, and yet again on 21 July, with the Hirohito request to allow the dispatch of Konoye. On 8 August, Moscow declared war.

'Perhaps,' says Kase towards the end of a book of tantalising interest, not least for the memorable and fresh vignettes of Hitler, Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt, 'for a while the effect of the atomic bomb could be minimised by propaganda. But the massed invasion of Manchuria by the Red Army was impossible to hide from the people. The great avalanche from the North stunned GHQ. They knew the game was up.'

Atom bombs? They mean 'the obliteration of mankind, instantaneous and inescapable'. He warns us that 'The choice is whether there should be a warless or a manless world.'

THE PROSPECT BEFORE US

By John Dos Passos. *John Lehmann.* 15s.

Reviewed by C. H. Sisson

The Prospect before Us is mainly about the perspectives immediately behind Mr. Dos Passos. Mr. Dos Passos visited England during the war; he has been here again since: he has also, since the war, been in various South American countries and, naturally, in the U.S.A. He is interested, as we all are, in 'our solving a few of the

social and political problems of a corporate and industrial society.' And with a soft disclaimer he says: 'About all a moderately observant man of letters with a certain amount of experience in a somewhat special sort of journalism can do to add his nickel's worth' to the current solutions 'is to set forth what he has seen and what, in his opinion, it means.'

What Mr. Dos Passos has seen is, as we should expect from what we know of him as a novelist, vividly and above all readably presented, except where, as happens only occasionally, the texture of the writing becomes too thin to hold the attention. We live in an age when there is an almost morbid popular appetite for the distraction of more and more information, an appetite stimulated no doubt by the exceptional means of satisfying it that we have at our disposal. If only, it is felt, we could be absolutely everywhere at once and see absolutely everything that is going on, how much better we should understand everything. We are prepared bravely to face the risk that, with so many distractions, we may be left without time or patience to understand anything at all.

That is not a risk to which Mr. Dos Passos falls victim. If, wandering round the world with a pair of large eyes and a pair of large ears, he is so ready with his notebook that he records too often mere parrot-like or sentimental chatter, he is perfectly aware on what principles he is working. He is looking and listening for whatever indicates the relative strengths of 'the current that makes for self-government and the current that makes for dictatorship.' He has a thesis to propound. 'For a very few short years we will be able to make a choice between a stratified autocratic society more or less on the Russian model and the self-governing Republic which is our heritage.' Our own heritage is a different and in some ways a richer one; it is not 'a society without any lid on it' such as Mr. Dos Passos takes it that the Americans want. But there are many bits of horse-sense in the book, wholesome for us to chew on. 'We are drifting towards a dangerous merger of political and economic power.' Or this: 'It frightens me to think how easily our salesmen could be set to peddling *Pravda* or *Izvestia*.'

ESSAY ON HUMAN LOVE

By Jean Guitton, with a Foreword by the Earl of Halifax. Translated by M. Chaning-Pearce. *Rockliff Publishing Corporation.* 15s.

Reviewed by Cynthia Rowland

It is the defect of all studies of the nature of love that they must be written either by men or women. Jean Guitton, in his scholarly, sometimes irritating, sometimes movingly beautiful *Essay on Human Love* is not free from taint of this original sin. Yet, awaiting an author who shall have some remembrance of a past incarnation in the opposite sex, it is a very able study indeed.

In many respects it is a sad essay. 'It is the right time to study a subject when it is about to disappear,' remarks the author of the romantic, Tristan concept of love. The words might, without exaggeration, be held to apply to the whole subject. What was formerly passion, or at its coldest, the subject of passionate argument, has become mechanism. Where we listened, wept and were ennobled, we now rationalise and cavil and degrade. For one must argue about this essay, whereas when quite a portion of Jean Guitton's thesis was covered by Max Beerbohm in *The Happy Hypocrite*, one listened, smiled and remembered.

And the language! '*Erosphere, parthenosphere*'. These are words which justify the saying that no author is a hero to his translator, and the translator has wisely left them alone.

With a deep insight he traces the development of love, from its initial crisis, to the enduring relationship that can be, but so seldom is, slowly, painfully yet magnificently extracted from a life in common. He accepts that first love is a projection, without using the word, or that slick evasion, 'only' a projection. He follows the development of this projection into a medium of exchange between the lover and the loved.

Where this essay fails is that its philosophy is nowhere extended to cover the findings of sociology, or the author would have avoided such statements as that incest has been universally abhorred, or that women from earliest times have been regarded as chattels. Whereas parent-child incest seems to have been regarded as

ominous, brother-sister incest was not necessarily so. Just as animals may be intensely inbred for a couple of generations in order to establish some desirable trait, so it seems that brother-sister incest may have been considered desirable, as with Sigmund and Signy, in order to produce heroes, or, as in Egypt, to produce Pharaohs.

Similarly, evidence strongly suggests the existence of a matriarchate as the earliest form of society. When paternity was dubious or unacknowledged, but maternity obvious, the transmission of property, the economic basis of society, could only proceed through the woman, thus giving her a position of pre-eminent importance. Even when a patriarchal society began to emerge, the heavenly hierarchy remained unchanged for centuries, with the cult of the great Mother Goddesses, Ishtar, Cybele, Isis.

Although deeply disturbed by the duality of sexuality and spirituality, which is less apparent to a woman, Guitton is too much a follower of the Johannine tradition not to recall that all love is one, both human and divine. But he does not follow this up by concluding that if our concept of love is to change, as he suggests it will, then our concept of Deity must change with it. Man, struggling to emerge from the Matriarchate, awoke to the concept of the all-powerful Father, and the Mother was supplanted by Eve, the temptress emerging from man's own body. The concept of Sonship led gradually, with all the gradualness of two thousand years, to a greater equality for all humans, including women. And since that much abused, much misunderstood idea, of equality has not proved satisfactory in itself, a further development must follow. The new dogma of the Assumption may be a pointer.

But perhaps the wind of creation may carry more sombre values. If, having failed to achieve our birthright, we are now moving into an Age of Hate; if there is any work or device, or learning or knowledge in the post-atomic period, then some later scholar may find this book, and remark sadly, but with reasonable accuracy, and a hindsight denied to us: 'This, then, was Western Man's concept of the nature of human love.'

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ABOUT KINGSMILL

By Hesketh Pearson and Malcolm Muggeridge. *Methuen.* 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by A. Calder-Marshall

I met Hugh Kingsmill only once, and that was near the end of his life. Hesketh Pearson had several times said, 'You must meet Hughie', which from Pearson was the highest form of compliment; and at last, on one of Kingsmill's rare visits to London, he arranged a dinner at the Authors' Club (to which they and Muggeridge belonged because it was 'the one place in London where it was unlikely for you to meet a writer').

I went with apprehension. Though I had always had the liveliest enjoyment in Pearson's company, I was afraid that the combination of Pearson and Kingsmill would be so intimate that I would be excluded; that dinner would be like an entertainment by a literary Nervo & Knox without the safety barrier of footlights.

I need not have been afraid. It was true that they fed one another with leads like first-class comedians, and that any moment in the conversation that might have been embarrassing was filled with gusts of laughter which prepared one for something funny even if nothing very funny had preceded. But that evening, I laughed and enjoyed myself more than I have done for years. The love and sympathy which Pearson and Kingsmill had for one another was in itself delightful. The gusto, which might so easily have been false, was genuine; and their friendship was not drawn in upon each other. It went out to other people with extraordinary warmth. I regard myself normally as a boring conversationalist. I have the impression that I talked well that evening, because they created the atmosphere in which everyone talked his best. 'If that was Kingsmill sick,' I thought as I left Whitehall Court, 'what a great conversationalist he must have been when he was well!'

Now Kingsmill is dead and his two greatest friends have, in a series of reminiscent letters, sought to re-create the Kingsmill they knew. They have chosen an informal method, because he was an informal man. A full-dress biography would lay the spirit of a writer such as

Kingsmill, who so readily put down his pen to talk with a friend. It is by no means a perfect book. Like most correspondence, it is repetitious; the proofs have been corrected perfunctorily. A lot of the judgments, because they are guided by love, are over-kind. But in a world grown so lean through under-kindness, this last is a fault that can be readily excused. Between them, they have re-created the Kingsmill they knew. By no means the whole man, their Kingsmill is one worth knowing.

In his lifetime, he received less praise than many far less worthy, for a reason which may well be the cause of a later reputation. This is how Malcolm Muggeridge puts it.

'To be determinedly an individual in a collectivist age, an uncommon man in the Century of the Comman Man, contemptuous of politics when they were an obsession, to be a mystic in a materialist age, and to laugh about what others regarded solemnly—such was Hughie's fate. The gadarene swine swept past in an endless rush, and he looked at them with wonder, and some horror, and sometimes with a certain amusement; went gingerly to the edge of the cliff and looked over to see them hurling themselves to destruction. It was not a particularly comfortable position, but, as you and I know, an immensely rewarding one. Hughie was the wisest man I have ever met, or am ever likely to meet, just because he had that faculty of standing aside. The circumstance from which all his personal difficulties flowed was also the circumstance which made him so outstanding a person.'

POWER POLITICS

By Georg Schwarzenburg

Published under the auspices of The London Institute of World Affairs. *Stevens* 70s.

The first edition of this work was published ten years ago; since then 'the complete change in the intellectual climate has affected the presentation of the subject' and Dr. Schwarzenburg has not only brought it up to date, but has largely rewritten it for this second edition. A distinguished international lawyer, Dr. Schwarzenburg provides a working theory of international relations which fits the facts and, what is even more useful, a comprehensive guide through the ramifications of international organisations.

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PETER QUENNELL (*D. Mail*)

CHAPMAN & HALL

FRENCH PAINTING

By Basil Taylor. *Thames & Hudson.* 42s.

Reviewed by Eric Newton

The available literature on French painting is naturally extensive, but there was room for a new book on an old theme. The conception of how to treat a biggish subject, emphasising its unity without sacrificing too much of its detail, must vary from generation to generation. Moreover, the kind of book the public has begun to need during the last decade is very different from what would have seemed satisfactory twenty years ago, when the reading public was divided much more sharply into specialists on the one hand and uninstructed laymen on the other.

Every non-specialist writer has to face the problem of what he may justifiably omit. What matters is not the reader's ignorance of the subject itself but the set of fundamental principles agreed upon in advance between author and reader. If these are not established at the outset, no book, however 'popular', will be intelligible. It is not a question of explaining Poussin to a reader who has never heard of him, but of explaining the meaning of 'Classicism' to someone who has never wondered what the word means as applied to the visual arts. It is here that the mid-twentieth-century writer is fortunate in his readers, and Mr. Basil Taylor has taken full advantage of his good fortune. He assumes exactly the right amount of understanding without asking for a corresponding fund of knowledge. Consequently he can plunge straight into his subject, use adult, and therefore compact and vivid, phraseology, and cover in fifty pages the ground that once required two hundred.

Mr. Taylor's admirable text and one hundred and fifty quarto-sized plates come fairly near to the ideal combination for a reader who is neither a student of art history nor an amiable philistine. The choice of illustrations, from the School of Avignon to Seurat and Cézanne, could hardly be bettered. The text is closely dovetailed with them and, brief though it is, few important names have been omitted. To cover five centuries without creating an effect either of awkward compression or of facile generalisation demands not only a sense of proportion but also a grasp of the continuity that relates each section to the last.

Mr. Taylor's sense of proportion is unquestionable. His sense of continuity varies, and, oddly enough, it is weakest when he comes to the end of his narrative in the late nineteenth century. Artists of the earlier periods emerge naturally from their historical backgrounds and the general temper of the century to which they belong. Mr. Taylor's grasp of that changing temper is firmly sketched in, and each painter takes his predestined place in it.

There are plenty of minor figures in the book, and a certain number of mediocrities who had to be included. What emerges is the oddly theoretical character of French art. The French have always had the limitations of their virtues. Their art is always immensely professional and courageously experimental, but never—with the exception of Watteau—profound.

THE HUMAN VOICE

By Jean Cocteau. Translated by Carl Wildman. *Vision.* 9s. 6d.

Reviewed by Anthony Curtis

The end of an affair, but not an affair with spiritual implications. Just an ordinary normal hundreds-of-them-every-week over there affair in which a woman gets ditched and it breaks her heart. You hear her last conversation on the telephone. God, how she's been waiting for him to ring! 'This goodbye . . . yes, it really is . . . goodbye.' Minor, slight even, but perfect, plumb right in every remark, every silence, this one-act piece with only the woman and the telephone on the stage is a comic delight. Not merely does it reveal the woman, the lover, the affair, but also that bizarre, that chancy means of communication, the telephone. Written in 1930, with it Cocteau abandoned the little theatres for the Comédie Française. An apostasy? Or a manœuvre for a momentarily fresh place on the pillow?

Mr. Wildman prints the French text as well. A double mistake. For one thing it shows up the flatness of his version. And secondly, the original would have made room for another short piece. Why not the version of the *A Phoenix Too Frequent* theme which Cocteau wrote for Arletty?

IN SEARCH OF LONDON

By H. V. Morton. *Methuen.* 12s. 6d.

UNKNOWN LONDON

By Walter G. Bell. *The Bodley Head.* 25s.

Reviewed by Rufus Noel-Buxton

Mr. H. V. Morton writes for the visitor to London. Mr. Walter Bell wrote as a scholar appealing to the resident. Yet this could sound unfair to Morton, who combines an excellent easy style with a great degree of information. One warms to his sense (surviving into his awareness of the modern city) of the green and brown and grey land that surrounded the first village of London. Mr. Morton shows a vivid historical sense throughout his book, but I must note one inaccuracy, bred no doubt of a desire to give a fine presence to old natural features. He speaks of the Walbrook—rightly—as dividing Roman London in two, but he suggests that it was a *river* with a source miles north of the wall. This is not so; it scarcely pierced it, for it was born in Moorfields. It formed a series of estuarine arms, and to me this is even more romantic, for on these creeks were the capital's first anchorages and harbours.

Mr. Bell's admirable volumes have been unavailable now for very many years. *Unknown London* has now been produced again, with a wealth of photographs and reproductions of old manuscripts which alone would make it valuable. In this book the quiet, penetrative mind of the scholar-lover comes out, and every page reveals a burning sincerity, and faith in all the generations whose souls mingle on London ground.

Mr. Bell can afford to blow up, and lose, a few centuries, in dating an object. For instance, he says of London Stone: 'Is there any need to assume . . . that it is a relic of the Roman city? There is not the smallest rag of evidence associating it with Londinium . . . May it not be merely an honoured fragment of FitzAlwin's *stone* house?' (FitzAlwin was an early mayor.)

But, why should not a great stone originally lodged under the present Mansion House, at the edge of the Walbrook's channel (a fragment of it is now caged in a church wall on Cannon Street), be very

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ancient indeed, and coaeval with that first settlement at the spot—The Bank—which Mr. Morton rightly selects as his starting place for modern exploration?

THE SUBMERGED VILLAGE and Other Poems

By James Kirkup. *Oxford University Press.* 7s. 6d.

Reviewed by Robert Greacen

In our modern society the poet is expendable. An occasional poet may wangle a job at the B.B.C. or with the British Council; and there the matter usually ends. Only a handful of fanatics read contemporary poetry with the least interest or understanding. The poet has replied to society by making his work less and less intellectually accessible.

James Kirkup is sufficiently a *good* poet not to have become mortally wounded by the lack of an appreciable public. He would, I imagine, write in any case from the pressure of his own need. Awarded a Gregory Fellowship in Poetry at Leeds University, he had thus been encouraged to carry on his work. This, incidentally, may be the beginning of University sponsorship—as practised in the U.S.—of serious creative and critical writing that publishers cannot afford to put between boards because of high costs and small sales.

Kirkup's special gift is purity of image, and of all the younger poets, he, perhaps, represents the strongest reaction to the overtly political verse of the thirties. Not indeed that he is indifferent to man as a social and political animal. He fellow-travels with the later W. H. Auden and, like him, is obsessed by the need for love and by contemplation of death, as in these lines:

> Dear love, sweet music of my thought,
> what light will ever save us from our
> love's dark death?
> What is the lost reality you know,
> O grail of longing? Shall we learn
> from death?

Kirkup's individual quality comes out most strongly in his lyrics. His images are direct and concrete. Consider:

Slung between the homely poplars at
the end of the familiar avenue, the
Great
Bear in its lighted hammock swings.

With this volume, Kirkup has made his place secure among the best contemporary English poets.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

B. H. Liddell Hart. *Cassel.* 12s. 6d.

The first edition of this brilliant study of the German Generals and of the military events of the last war from their point of view was published early in 1948. Since then a great deal of new information has come to light and Captain Liddell Hart has interviewed even more generals. He has therefore not only revised his original work, but considerably enlarged it. The most interesting and valuable addition is the account of the character and achievements of Guderian, the creator and trainer of the German armoured forces and, incidentally, a great admirer, professionally, of Captain Liddell Hart. It is clear, from the evidence, that the overwhelming success of the French campaign was largely due to him and his determination to exploit the break-through at Sedan. He even went so far as to disregard his superior's orders to slow down down the advance, and it was only Hitler's direct intervention that made him halt his armoured divisions before Dunkirk, with the result that the British Army was able to escape by sea. The reasons for the 'halt-order' before Dunkirk still remain obscure, but it is clear that it was not entirely due to Hitler, but to a combination of Goering's ambition for the Luftwaffe and the hesitation of the senior generals. Indeed, the German High Command were much more responsible for the disastrous decisions throughout the war than any of them now care to admit. The failure of the German defence in Normandy, for instance, was due quite as much to conflicting plans between the generals as to the long-distance interference by Hitler.

Captain Liddell Hart says himself that it is still too early to write a history of the Second World War. What he has done is to preserve for future historians a most valuable collection of essential material.

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THE CRUEL SEA By Nicholas Monsarrat. *Cassell.* 12s. 6d.
ROBIN WASTRAW By E. H. W. Meyerstein. *Gollancz.* 12s. 6d.
CATHERINE BROOKE By Ruth Marsden. *Macgibbon & Kee.* 10s. 6d.
FIELD DAY By Margery Fisher. *Collins.* 9s. 6d.

Reviewed by Stevie Smith

This story of the little sharp ships running like dogs of the sea to escort their convoys is a beautiful classic of man's devotion and aggressiveness against the natural enemy, the cruel sea, and the enemies of war and enforced companionship at close quarters. There is the taste of salt water and the bitterer taste of salt water on iron. Mr. Monsarrat tells the story and tells it for all time, speaking for every seaman, men of the Royal Navy, the Merchant Navy, the R.N.R. and the R.N.V.R., but speaking also of individuals, and especially of Commander Ericson and the officers and ratings who served under him. Commander Ericson is not very young because he was axed from the Royal Navy in the First World War, but in the Second World War he joins up again and is put in command of the corvette *Compass Rose.* It is the flower names one likes the English so much for giving to their ships; there is such affection for the deadly ships in the Harebells, Roses, Daffodils and Peonies. If these names have not yet been used, one hopes they will be—the Carnation and the Sunflower and the Hyacinth. After the *Compass Rose* has been torpedoed and sunk, Commander Ericson is given the frigate *Saltash.* Backwards and forwards the little ships go on their deadly passages, from Gibraltar to Murmansk, on the Western Approaches, across the Atlantic and back again. And all the time there is the sea and the bitter air and the danger. But it is right that the men who ride them should seem more important than the weather and the seas, and Mr. Montsarrat thinks that they are. There is Ericson's Number One, a young ex-journalist, and the affection that grows between them in the midst of exasperation and fatigues; and there is the dumb suffering of the simple men and their worrying thoughts about their wives and sweethearts left lonely; they cannot but hope, in the shopping queues, the blitzes and the factories. The sombre quiet period brings these thoughts; then comes the fierce action, the effort, the excitement and the skill. And these things do not come as interruptions to the elements but only to shift them, with a grand human impertinence, a little lower in the scale of what matters. It is a noble book and a long one.

Mr. Meyerstein's beautiful book is suffused with a feeling of dislike for the opposite sex. About this emotion it is impossible to remain straight-faced, so infantine and graceful it is, so compounded of impudence and fear. One gets the picture—it might have come from an early Punch—Cruikshank or Leech ('Collapse of Old Party'), or from that arch enemy of feminity, Sterne himself—of a mischievous urchin sticking pins into a lady and tearing off when she rounds on him. Robin Wastraw, our young hero, early develops anti-feminine feelings, sharing with his gifted and eccentric father, whom he dearly loves, a dislike of 'Aunt Barbara', a poor soul, who tends him and tends also her own intolerable parent Mr. Irons. It is suggested she has attempted parricide, and few of her own sex would blame her, but all passes in a conflagration in which the lady, herself having started it, perishes. Robin is a child of this world and a child of grace; devoted to his own interests and sure where they lie: prudent, calculating, yet wholehearted and loving in the world of art and nature; sensitive, brutal and innocent. Such complications of character are resolved more often in life than in literature. Mr. Meyerstein is a very distinguished writer with a profound sense of style and a humour wicked, and on occasion boyish—Lady Luney-Bynner and the Dédas-Dorneuils, for instance (dead as a doornail, of course). He has surpassed himself with

this story of the young sage lad of humble origin who is taken up by the eccentric Sir Cyril, having decided, on a day's visit to Oxford of rare luminosity (not so much helped to the decision by the unusual don as poked affectionately in the ribs for having arrived at it himself), that the University is not for him. Sir Cyril takes him into his household to arrange his fine library for him . . . did not Robin cut his infant teeth on *The History of the Northern Peoples* by Olaus Magnus, Bishop of Upsala, dated 1553? The Baronet's sister, Bertha Hoyer de Hoe, who is living in her brother's house for reasons of economy and to avoid the company of her ex-Household Cavalry hard-drinking husband, is a beautiful boyish-looking lady—'looking like a *thoroughly-caned* boy' is Robin's comment, in one of her frequent clashes with her reluctant host. She does not like the way things are shaping; does this learned favoured lad know his place?—will it not be the gardener's boy all over again—and worse? Her female friends, animated grotesques and the bane of the baronet's life, support her efforts to get Robin ousted, but in vain; and when Bertha tries to seduce him, Sir Cyril steps upon the bedroom scene and dismisses her. It is because the conventions of chivalry are everywhere so gleefully outraged that one gets the feeling of childish malice. But this recurrent note of infantility sets off the stylishness of the book, its wit, its learning and its poetry, and adds piquancy to a theme whose undertones, without it, might engage too much attention, and whose falling off at the end—that preposterous marriage—be less tolerantly received. What remains always, for Mr. Meyerstein's glory and our satisfaction, is the poet's keen and fiery eye, the sorting eye, the eye that accepts and rejects.

Miss Marsden's heroine, Catherine Brooke, is a lady of our times; she lives in Cambridge and feels stifled; her husband was killed in the war and she cannot love her little boy Robin as she feels she ought to. She is one of those women whose instincts died long ago and whose intelligence is too small to put anything lively in their place. But she is intelligent, up to a point, and honest with herself too—up to a

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point. She asks herself if her friends, the academic wives and so on, are as 'sensitive' as she is and as open to temptation? Yes, they are, but she goes on behaving as if they were not. It is depressing to read about this foolish Catherine, and the little child dying of meningitis in neglected circumstances, and the sad visits to the mother-in-law and then the sad nervous situation she ties herself up in with Miles, a shadow of a man married to a fair drunkard. Miles turns out to be not quite up to it; and now we have a really splendid Catherine passage: 'She felt she ought to feel like a character in a play, and to some extent she did. Either she could turn to Miles, to the "young man", bury her face in the lapels of his coat . . . This line seemed to be suggested by his provocatively sentimental expression . . .' The reader who by this time will have got the hang of Miss Marsden's really monstrous truth-telling, that has about it so comically at times the feminine air of beans being spilt and tales told out of school, may wonder if the truth is enough. If it were, would it be so enervating, so exasperating? Would he be left hoping that the ordinary 'rather common' young man she marries herself off to in the end, will cut the cobwebs with a knife?—and her throat too? Miss Marsden is artful and courageous; her characters' distasteful suffering stirs our feelings, but is she not, like her heroine, at some half-way place? She tells the truth and nothing but the truth, but it is not the whole truth.

Mrs. Fisher has a pleasant humour and a power of selection unusual in a beginner. Her theme is one day in the life of a famous public school (some will recognise an affectionate off-stage portrait of Oundle's distinguished headmaster), a day devoted to the O.T.C.'s yearly exercise. In the sense that it is something out of the ordinary, it is a field day for the other people in the book too. The housemaster has sprained his ankle so he cannot take part in the exercise; this makes him rather peevish and there is a fuss between him and his dreamy wife because she thinks she is going to have a baby and this has cropped up before and then she knows she is not going to have a baby. The wife for once speaks out and this turns out to be a good thing, because for too long they have been in the habit of not talking seriously to each other. The restless sister-in-law finds herself a job, and stops irritating everybody; the little kitchen-maid, accused of stealing, is cleared of the charge and promoted to nursery maid; the young maids giggle and pin up pictures of film stars; sage cookie in her fortress is as sound as an apple. The older schoolboys—it is wartime—are wondering whether they shall join up or apply for university exemption and the VI form intellectual carries the sister-in-law's baby around because he 'likes a bit of family life.' At the end of the day everybody is relieved it is over and feels all the same that it has been an important day, a rich day.

Mrs. Fisher does well with this by no means unambitious story—its simplicity is deceptive—but she has not quite succeeded in making of the whole something more than the sum of its parts.

ONE IS ONE

By P. D. Cummins. *Macmillan.* 7s. 6d.

Reviewed by James Turner

To transform suffering into its true form, love! That is the power of these poems, perhaps of all real poetry, and in the poem on Hugh Dormer, killed in Normandy 1944, this suffering is brilliantly so transformed. But, for the rest, the poet's despair is so mountainous, it obscures everything but itself. This despair is our despair, this suffering our suffering. Can we, any more than this poet (for all the fineness of the poetry) escape 'these empty skulls, these shrunken, rattling hearts'? We are the ones 'who dared not waken into life through death', 'pierced by the thorn we have ignored the rose'. And pain is no absolution for having failed to love enough. These are true and passionate poems in which man has something more than 'innate loneliness'; he has an ardent despair and self-disgust. This despair is almost as great a possession to the 'characters' of the poems as love was to the Saints: seen equally in the eyes of a caged tiger, in a displaced person, and in the poet's own heart. With such despair, so passionately felt, all things are possible. If you look for it, in these poems there is Love as well.

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